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SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 598. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 16TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 598.] [PRICE ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending June 16th, 1900.

A Game of Consequences.

"ARE you quite sure there's no one to meet me? No carriage or anything?"

"Certain, Miss. None of the castle people have been down to-day."

"But it is impossible, they expected me—they——" the girl broke off silenced by the look of curiosity in the station-master's eyes. If Lady Arabella were so ill-bred as to ignore a guest in this fashion, matters would not be improved by making it public.

"Is there any conveyance I could hire?"

"I might get Jacob Towers to lend his cart for a bit."

"Oh, no, I'd rather walk."

"It's a matter of three miles to the castle, and it looks like snow. Still, you know best, Miss."

The girl looked distressed. What could she do? It would be too terrible to arrive at her Aunt's in a cart, but the idea of tramping through the snow was even less attractive. Was ever girl in such a plight?

The station master had apparently come to the end of his suggestions. Moreover, there seemed nothing else to suggest.

"I shall walk," she answered, and with a flush on her pretty cheeks and a sparkle in her eyes that boded ill for Lady Arabella, Nora Carleon set out at a good round pace.

A short distance down the lane, the sound of wheels attracted her attention. A minute later and a high dogcart dashed into sight.

The young fellow who was driving pulled up smartly by her side.

"I'm afraid I've kept you waiting," he said pleasantly, "do you think you can manage to get up? I daren't leave the mare to her own devices, she's terribly skittish to-day."

This was hardly the sort of equipage one would have expected Lady Arabella to own. There was an air of rakishness about the whole turnout, from the big raw-boned chesnut to the good-looking devil-may-care driver, that was totally at variance with Nora's preconceived notions of her aunt. Besides who could the young man be?

A guest, she decided, as she mounted, not without difficulty, to the seat by his side.

"We'll send down for your traps later on," he said, "the girls will lend you some of their finery this evening. By the bye," he added, "I can't say much for Len's powers of description. He led me to suppose you

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Nora Carleon set out at a good round pace.

were something very different. Anyway," with a smile which revealed a set of white teeth, "we're awfully glad to have you. The girls are mad to see you."

Nora felt more puzzled every moment. Lady Arabella's daughters were, if possible, even more stiff and starched than their mother. As to their being "mad" about anything, the idea was too humourous. And who, she wondered, was "Len"? She laughed and tried to turn the conversation.

"Are they all well?" she asked.

"Fit as a fiddle, and quite determined that your visit shall be a success. I can't tell you how good I think it was of you to take pity on us. It's such a change to come from town to a benighted spot like this. I hope you won't find it too dull."

Evidently this charming young fellow did not know the reason for her visit to the Castle. She suddenly felt more reconciled to the prospect of "a three months' stay."

"I expect Len will be very mad at having missed you," he went on, "but the fact is, I couldn't resist the temptation to come myself. Len takes such a time to adorn himself—you know his ways—so I sneaked downstairs while he was dressing and jumped in the cart.

"By-the-bye, did you have much trouble to get out of your engagement?"

So the horrid boy did know after all.

"Terrible," she said clasping her hands. "I never went through such a time. But don't speak of it. I'm sick to death of the whole thing. I want a little peace."

"I always understood he was a very decent sort of fellow. At least Len gave us that idea."

"Possibly his title, not to mention his money, atones for a lot of sins in most people's eyes. But in my mind I never met so odious or so vulgar a man, never."

The young man glanced at her in astonishment.

"Have you cut the concern altogether?" he asked.

"I don't know what right you have to ask me," she returned indignantly, "but if you mean have I broken my engagement definitely, I have."

"But what on earth are you going to do?"

"Wait here till I hear from India. My brother's quartered out there, you know."

"Good gracious. Well, of course, I, that is we, shall be delighted for you to stay as long as possible. Only I'm afraid you'll find it rather dull. I hope," he added, in a livelier manner, "you'll be satisfied with the arrangements we've made about the show."

"The show?"

"Oh hang it—I thought that you'd understand. Surely that duffer Len explained. It's a sort of comic opera business—just your line.—You've got a ripping part. Len's collared the next best, and I come in a sort of third. The girls hover about generally."

What on earth had come to Lady Arabella, Nora wondered, the utmost in the way of entertainment that lady sanctioned being "A happy evening for the poor."

"That's awfully jolly," said the girl. "I love theatricals."

Her companion glanced at her once more in the odd fashion that seemed peculiarly his own.

"Here we are," he said, skilfully turning into a long drive, which led to a large untidy looking house.

Shouts greeted their arrival. A group of young people rushed on to the steps, a couple of dogs barked frantically, and got in the way of a tall fair man who was gazing intently at Nora.

In a minute, she was surrounded, one took her muff, another seized upon her coat; finally, laughing and protesting she was borne off to a cosy room furnished in a heterogeneous but delightful manner, suggestive alike of boudoir and smoking room.

"We were so afraid you wouldn't come," said a tall dark girl, "it's too good of you not to disappoint us."

"Yes," chorused a number of feminine voices, "too good."

"And you mustn't mind our saying so, but you're even prettier than we hoped."

"Yes, isn't she a dear."

Nora wondered if by chance she had strayed into the county asylum. Any notion that she was at the Castle being utterly dispelled by the last remark. "Prettier than they hoped!" What nice girls they were. Even if they were lunatics she liked them.

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All the same it was very perplexing, and the longer she stayed the more difficult it was to explain. How should she solve the difficulty?

Her attention was distracted by the sound of voices in the hall.

"Fair? My dear boy, you're a perfect ass. She's a brunette, as dainty a little beauty—"

"Little," sneered the other, "five foot seven if she's an inch."

"Your grandmother!"

"Come and see for yourself, then!"

"See? As if I didn't know. Just fancy my not knowing Peggy Lovell."

"Yes, but——"

"My dear Fairleigh, don't be ridiculous. Peggy——" he turned into the room, and advanced with outstretched hands.

"By Jove!" he said, "it isn't Peggy after all."

Nora started. She had suddenly found the key to the enigma. Peggy Lovell was a burlesque actress, whom these people—delightful people, she called them—had asked down to help them with some theatricals. Why? Oh why was she not a burlesque actress? Why, oh why was she condemned to stay at the Castle with a set of frumps—so she designated Lady Arabella and her daughters.

A sudden thought—daring as delightful—flashed through her brain.

"No," she said sweetly, "I'm not Peggy—but perhaps I'll do instead."

For a moment there was a blank. Then everyone spoke at the same time.

"Delighted, only too pleased. After all, Peggy was a little, just a little short, for a boy's part."

"Of course," asked Len critically, "you can sing?"

A nod from Nora.

"Dance?"

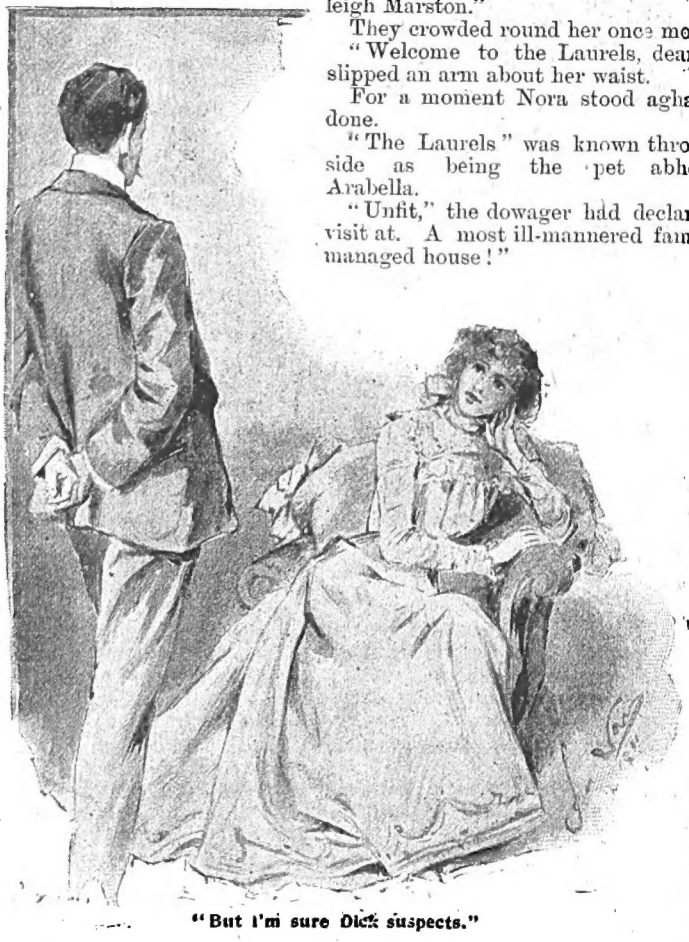
"What do you think?"

"Mere matter of form," muttered Len, while Fairleigh glared at him from the background.

"You must be tired, Miss ——?" he paused and looked enquiringly.

Nora flushed, and bit her lip.

Somehow she could not give a false name even in a jest. These people were so kind, it would be such a mean return. After all, she was her own mistress; now that she had broken with Lord Brewster and quarrelled with his family. She had in fact left his sister, who was chaperoning her, at a moment's notice. She was responsible to no one.



"But I'm sure Dick suspects."

"I am Nora Laurie," she said, simply, giving her two Christian names only.

Fairleigh took her by the hand. "Then, Miss Laurie, let me present the family. "My sisters," pointing to the four pretty girls who had seized on her. "My cousin, Lord Staplethorpe," with a nod in the direction of the tall fair man she had seen on the steps, "my elder brother Len, and last your humble servant Fairleigh Marston."

They crowded round her once more with kind words.

"Welcome to the Laurels, dear," said Alice, and slipped an arm about her waist.

For a moment Nora stood aghast at what she had done.

"The Laurels" was known throughout the country side as being the pet abhorrence of Lady Arabella.

"Unfit," the dowager had declared, "for any girl to visit at. A most ill-mannered family, and a most ill-managed house!"

Looking up—still with a trace of dismay on her face—Nora met Fairleigh's eyes.

It seemed to her she read a challenge in his face.

Turning she asked the girls to take her to her room. She suddenly and inexplicably felt cold and tired—and disappointed.

* * *

"Tell you what it is, old chap," said Lord Staplethorpe to Len. "I'm no end puzzled about her,"—with a nod in Nora's direction. "I've seen her—more than once too—somewhere in town. But where, that's the puzzle."

"Don't try to be funny, Dick," said Len, "where should you see her but on the stage?"

"That's just were it wasn't," replied Dick, triumphantly.

"Stage door then?" suggested Len.

"No, no, old chap, nothing of the kind. I say," glancing towards Fairleigh who was in attendance upon Nora, "doesn't it strike you that the boy is rather gone in that quarter?"

"The boy, as you call him, is twenty-five, Dick."

"All the worse for him—the attack will be the more severe."

"Aren't you afraid of being cut out?"

Dick laughed and glanced at Alice.

"Not much, old chap," he said, and something in his manner made Len Marston open his eyes.

Positively he was in love with Alice! Well, she was a dear girl and Staplethorpe was an excellent match. And the head of the house of Marston felt at peace with

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"Oh, Nora, what diamonds! Are they real?"

himself and all the world. Meanwhile, the rehearsals went on apace. Nora made a bewitching boy, and, so everyone declared, beat Peggy Lovell hollow.

Nothing had been heard of that fascinating damsel save a brief wire to the effect that she was "laid up," while so far as Nora was concerned Lady Arabella might never have existed.

"All the same," murmured Dick, watching carefully, "she's not used to it. Hasn't the tricks of the stage, doubt if she's ever been on one."

Fairleigh and Nora both heard the remark. The one flushed to her temples, the other stared stolidly at her and then on the ground.

"Well," cried Nora sharply, "are you dissatisfied? Would you like me to throw up the part? I've no wish to continue it, in fact if you like I'll go back to town to-night."

Fairleigh made no answer but stood moodily a long way off.

"Do you believe what he says?"

"Yes."

"Then, then you think I'm—what do you think I am?" she asked superbly.

"An extremely pretty girl," he returned imperturbably.

"That's an evasion. Why do you suppose I came here?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

As he grew colder she waxed more indignant.

"I will not remain here to be insulted. I will leave this evening. I will go—"

"Where?" he asked quietly. "You forget that you said you must stay here till you heard from your brother in India." There was a scornful inflection in his voice that did not escape her.

She turned pale and for a moment was silenced.

"If," he went on slowly, "you don't want to tell me your story, why it is your business, and I have no right to force your confidence. But I should like to help you."

She murmured some incoherent words, begging, it seemed to him, for silence on his part.

"You need not fear," he said. "I shan't give you away. But," he came nearer and spoke in a low almost impressive sort of voice, "I am sure Dick suspects."

"He won't——"

"No, of course not. Dick's a gentleman. I wish," he went on earnestly, "that you would let me give you my assistance. You're so young, so pretty, it's such a pity, such a dreadful pity."

"What?" she asked.

He flashed a look of scorn.

"Oh, don't make matters worse," he cried passionately. "If you won't own up at any rate don't pretend. At all events to me."

She leant back in her chair, and for a moment she seemed to go round.

Had she done anything so very terrible? The Marstons were a happy-go-lucky family with a delightful freedom from conventionality, at most she had expected to be laughed at when she announced who and what she was.

But Fairleigh seemed to think it horribly deceitful. Perhaps it was wrong not to let her aunt know her whereabouts.

But then her liberty would end. Once let Lady Arabella discover that her niece was at the Laurels and all the dogs in Christendom—let alone Len's—wouldn't keep the intrepid dowager from storming the house.

"Won't you let me help you?" he asked once more. "I feel sure you were overpersuaded. Of your own will you could never have done such a thing. There's still time to put things straight. Dick has some influence, and Len and I are not without friends. Only trust in me, confide in me and all will be well. I beg you, I implore you, don't reject my assistance."

"I don't understand you," she said stiffly. "It seems to me you are making a great fuss over nothing."

He turned away stifling it seemed to Nora, rather a strong expletive.

"As you will," he said, "I have offered my help. You decline. I am powerless without your co-operation."

He stalked off the temporary stage with all the sulkiness if not the effect of a discarded suitor.

Nora left to herself was in two minds whether to laugh or cry. The first finally gained the day. She shook with merriment, what could he mean?

Suddenly an explanation suggested itself. He had heard of her engagement to Lord Brewster, and was urging her to make it up with that nobleman.

"Mercenary—like the rest," she thought bitterly, "can't understand a girl caring for anything but gold or title."

The family noticed with surprise that if Fairleigh were unusually silent Nora was particularly snappish, at any rate to their younger brother.

"I thought she was fond of him," said Alice sadly.

"Which," remarked Dick sapiently, "shows how little you know of your own sex. Now I"—but here he kissed her.

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The evening of what Fairleigh termed "the show" had arrived. The "County"—who with the exception of the folk at the castle regarded the Marstons with good humoured toleration largely tinctured with cordiality was well represented.

It was even rumoured that Lady Arabella herself had decided to bury the hatchet and show those "poor Marston girls that I am truly sorry for them."

The explanation of this demonstration of friendliness was, so Len declared, due to the presence of Lord Staplethorpe.

"She wants to catch you for Blanche, old chap," he murmured squinting through the curtain. "However there's still time for you to escape. She's not here yet."

Meantime Nora was dressing for her part. She was as Alice said "quite the most charming boy imaginable." Dressed in white satin covered with jewels, a laced hat on her golden curls, she was to be forgiven if she felt a thrill of admiration for her own dainty figure.

"Oh, Nora, what diamonds!" said Nancy Marston. "Are they real?"

"Of course," said Nora, fingering the necklace.

"You're never going to wear that?" said Fairleigh as Nancy flitted away. "Are you quite mad?"

"Don't you think it suitable?" she said, puzzled. "You know one is allowed a lot of latitude in burlesque."

"Don't," he said and took her almost roughly by the wrist.

"Look," pointing between the curtains.

"Well, what is it?"

"There in the front row, don't you see?"

"Good gracious, it's Lady Arabella and her daughters. Oh, Fairleigh, what shall I do?"

"They are of very little consequence. Look further on, there to the right. Now do you understand?"

His eyes rested on a pale delicate-looking man of middle height, with the querulous look of ill health on his face.

"Oh," with a little gasp, "it's Lord Brewster."

"Do you know who's sitting next to him—the chap with the fair beard?"

She shook her head, awed in spite of herself by his tone.

"A detective from Scotland Yard, sent to trace the diamonds stolen from Lady Jardine's (Lord Brewster's sister) a month ago. Now do you ask me what I mean? Now will you wear this cursed thing?"

He tore the necklace from her throat. Then suddenly clasped her in his arms, kissing her lips, her eyes, her hair with eager passionate haste.

"My love, my darling," he whispered, "why don't you trust me, why won't you believe I want to help you. Only tell me the truth and no one shall touch you."

"You mean——"

"I mean that I love you, that come what may I want you to be my wife."

"Oh, not that," she cried, "what do you mean by the truth?"

He put her from him and once again the look of scorn gathered in his eyes.

"The truth about the diamonds, the diamonds that you stole."

Another second he had left her.

* * * * *

A bell rang, hurriedly the stage was cleared She found herself white and trembling waiting to go on.

At the close of the performance the two last named gentlemen made their way to the stage. The curtain was up and many of the audience had crowded round the actors offering their congratulations. Presently Nora felt a touch on her arm. Fairleigh was eyeing her with a white set face and pleading eyes.

"Come," he whispered, "there's still time."

But as he spoke the detective stopped before them.

"Now," said the man in brown, "the game's up, my girl. Hand me the jewels and come quietly."

"Do you know who I am?" she asked calmly.

"Yes," was the reply, "you're Jessie Mills, maid to Miss Carleon, whose diamonds you're wearing."

"You are mistaken," she spoke in a high, clear voice. Everyone turned and listened.

"I am Nora Carleon herself—that lady—" pointing to Lady Arabella, "will identify me as her niece."

And even so the unhappy woman was compelled to acknowledge herself the aunt of a girl in tights!

* * * * *

Nora's folly might have had worse results.

Her sudden disappearance had been put down, by her friends, to a fit of temper, from which, it was argued, she would re-appear smiling and cheerful.

In the meantime, Mills, her maid, was believed to have levanted with the jewels, which led to Nora's attempted arrest as that person.

"We have all been at cross purposes," she told Fairleigh, "since the day when I spoke of Lord Brewster, and you thought I was alluding to a theatrical manager."

"Can you ever forgive me, darling, for my wicked suspicions?" he asked.

"Oh, that was nothing," she returned, with a shy look in her beautiful eyes, "although you thought I was a—a thief you loved me!"

And so her game of consequence ended in a happy marriage; so happy were they, that they never even wondered what the world said!

"Can you ever forgive me?" he asked.

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GIVEN UP.

THEY were strolling along the beach of a Yorkshire watering-place, watching the white-sailed boats make towards the shore, for out seaward the sky was growing black and threatening.

A quiet happiness rested on her face, impatience on his. She did not perceive it; the incoming sea claimed all her attention.

"Confoundedly dull here! Always the same old story!" he grumbled, grimly; and, shivering, he buttoned up his coat.

She turned and looked with surprise at her neighbour's discontented face.

"Yes," he repeated aloud, "the sea is always singing the same old story, and you have been repeating it for the last seven long years; I'm an idiot to listen to it."

She nodded smilingly.

"The emancipation of women is very fine in theory," he continued, crossly. "I myself have broken many a lance for it before now——"

"You have?" she answered him mockingly. "My brave knight, 'have' is the cradle-song with which grown-up children gladly sing themselves to sleep."

"That thrust does not touch me," he replied calmly. "My narcotic is work—work which brings blessings; but I ask you, what blessing has women's emancipation ever brought me?"

"The greatest in the world, for it has preserved you from domestic grievances."

"Oh, of course, you will overwhelm me with sarcasm. No; since I have seen to what this emancipation leads——"

"Well, to what, then?" she interrupted, quite undisturbed. "Not down into the depths, but into the broad highway of the world."

"That's just it," he said eagerly. "That's why marriage gets rarer every day, and bachelors and old maids increase in like proportion."

"I suspect," she replied with a fine smile, "that the old bachelors are unhappier than the old maids; we are more self-reliant and more careful."

"More self-reliant and more careful!" he burst forth, coming to an abrupt stand-still.

"Yes, much more self-reliant," she repeated, with a mischievous smile. "A man attends very well to the business or profession to which he has devoted years of study and practice——"

"How considerate of you, to admit even so much!" he broke in, with a laugh which betrayed as much annoyance as amusement.

"He may show himself decided and determined enough where his accustomed work is concerned," she went on, regardless of the interruption; "but, outside of that, especially in the ordinary details of life, man is usually a very helpless animal."

"How fortunate that nature has given the poor creature the support of women!" quoth he, sarcastically.

"It is indeed," she answered, with perfect gravity.

"Well, then," cried he, ready-witted enough to try and turn her admission to his own advantage, "that being the case, I wonder you are not willing to be a little more kindly-disposed towards me."

"My dear friend," she rejoined, with a ringing laugh, "I am only a woman it is true; but I am logician enough to know that nothing can be weaker and more inadmissible than to attempt to apply a general assertion to a particular case."

"You certainly are the most provoking woman alive!" cried he, frowning, but forced in spite of himself to echo her good-naturedly mocking laughter.

"It is getting too windy to stand here and listen to the catalogue of my defects; for you are apt to be discursive when you get on the subject," said she, with perfect good-humour, moving on as she spoke.

He walked beside her in silence until they reached a turn of the shore, where, in front and to the left, a long promontory jutted out, forming a little haven.

The waters were quiet there; some boats were visible in the distance; the bald, bleak sweep of low hills stood out beyond, half in sunlight, half in shadow, and near the beach was the wreck of an old barque that had lain there for several seasons, adding to the desolateness of the scene.

"What a gloomy spot this is! And you always seem to fancy it," he exclaimed, abruptly, with perhaps a faint echo of peevishness in his voice.

"That is because I am not gloomy," she answered with her imperturbable composure, adding in the same careless tone: "Has any special news from South Africa been published by the War Office?"

He only replied by a negative gesture.

"Does that mean there is no news, or that you don't know or care?" she asked teasingly.

"I said a little while ago that you were the most provoking woman in the world!" cried he.

"The repetition is even more energetic and irrelevant than the original remark," she said, in an unaltered voice.

"But you cannot deny that it is true," he retorted.

"I hardly think it is; however, wise men say we never know ourselves," she replied.

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"I believe you try to convince me that you don't own a heart—I wonder you have not already!" he exclaimed impetuously.

She stopped short and confronted him; a slight cloud passed over her face—her frank, honest eyes looked a little stern.

"You have said a good many unpleasant things to-day," she remarked, with a certain thrill of impatience in her tone.

As she spoke, she seated herself on a great piece of timber that had been washed up from some wreck and left lying on the beach. She looked fixedly at him as he stood silent before her, and, as he showed no disposition to speak, she went on:

"You seem annoyed—offended; I don't know that I have done anything to cause it."

"No?" he asked in a tone of doubt.

"No," she replied, firmly. "What is it? What do you want me to say or do?"

"I want you to be my wife!" he cried eagerly.

She shook her head and said slowly, as if repeating some lesson learned by heart:

"I am quite satisfied to receive a letter from you now and then, and in summer to spend four pleasant weeks in your society, and to hear you scold about woman's authorship and woman's emancipation, which make me quite unfitted to be a married woman. Let us meet here again eleven months from to-day. Give me your hand on it. You will not?"

"I'm tired of being your good friend. Next summer I shall go to Italy. I'm sick of going to the same place every year to spend my holiday."

"To Italy?" she laughed. "To Italy, in summer? Perhaps you want to try Roman baths on the spot, for influenza."

"I'm quite determined," he cried, vexed by her laughter. "I declare to you that I will keep my resolution, if you insist on yours."

She started.

"Don't be foolish," she said earnestly. "How could you be sure that you would be happier if I should yield to your wish? As a child, I caught at a brilliant soap bubble; but scarcely had I touched it when it burst, the soap dashed into my eyes and I cried with pain."

"I thought we had grown out of childhood," he replied dryly.

"And for that reason the understanding checks the resolution that would be easy to a child of sixteen."

He seized both her hands and began to speak with tremulous earnestness.

"And is it, then, so hard to give up that wicked pride—to be happy, and to bestow happiness like other mortals?"

She did not reply. She only gazed at the sea, without seeing it. She forgot to withdraw her hand from his, and a scalding tear that had started to her eye at his warm words rolled slowly down her cheek.

He thought he had conquered her proud heart, and was about to fold her in his arms, when she sprang hastily up, and while a bright flush rose to her face, she said with agitation:

"The time is past when such wishes filled my heart. That they did once I will not deny."

She threw back her head and looked at him firmly and frankly.

"Now it is over; I am contented and happy in my way, and I will remain so."

She spoke the last words with powerful energy, as if she feared to arouse a still more powerful opposition.

But she was mistaken.

He bent down, picked up a little stone, and slowly and carefully pounded in a nail which had just caught her dress. Other nails, too, seemed to him to need attention, and he examined and worked at the beam as conscientiously as though he had come out solely for that purpose.

This again was not quite what his companion desired. She began anew, in a lower tone:

"Believe me, my life appears to me like a peaceful haven—marriage like an open sea. I dare not venture out, for fear that I might suffer miserable shipwreck."

The last nail was pounded in. The stone flew out into the sea, and calmly, very calmly, came the reply.

"Why waste so many words? Why do you not tell me your true reasons? You would not be telling me anything new, for I know it. You have no confidence in me."

She met his gloomy, questioning gaze with frank eyes, in which a certain sadness struggled up despite her efforts. She rose, took his arm, and they retraced their steps, walking in silence again until they reached the open beach. Then he suddenly repeated:

"No confidence in me!"

"I had," she said in a low voice, which sounded ominously clear in his ears.

"Seven years have passed since then," he cried despairingly; "seven long years, in which I have tried to make good my offence against you in a moment of mad infatuation. Seven years, and you cannot forget it yet?"

"I cannot."

"You have no heart. Forgive me! I always forget that you are a celebrated authoress, with a whole heap of stored-up newspapers full of your praises. What does such a woman need of a heart that can bestow pardon when it is so earnestly begged for?"

"And yet I have a heart, and it beats as warmly as it did seven years ago; but my trust in men, which was greater than the sea, has all passed away. I must say it for once, so that all may be clear between us. Give it up—once deceived, I can never trust again; and what is a marriage without trust? A boat on the open sea, with neither sail nor rudder. Let us go in, my friend; the sun has set, and the night is coming on."

She went to her lodgings; he remained on the beach. But, the further she went away from him, the lower sank her courage and her ease of mind. And, when she stopped in her walk and listened to the deep murmur of the trees and sea, she felt overwhelmed with a feeling of desolation, as if she were a lost child who could not find the right path.

She sprang up and walked hastily onward, in order to come into the neighbourhood of human beings. He, on the contrary, found the loneliness of the beach congenial. The fresh sea wind cooled his burning brow, and the tossing sea harmonised with the agitation of his perturbed mind. Too long had he patiently waited; too long had he tried to make good that on which he had once failed; too long had he bowed before her will.

He had believed that he could overcome her opposition by his faith and his constancy. He had thought himself at the goal of his wishes—and she had sent him away with smiles, as if he were a presumptuous schoolboy. Anger, shame and love contended in his breast, and he knew not which feeling was the most powerful.

The storm beat against the waves and drove them

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close up to his feet. The wind snatched his hat from his head and raged round the lonely wanderer. But on and on he went, as if it were a pleasure to fight against his unseen adversary with all his physical strength.

What the power of the storm failed to do, the approaching night accomplished. She laid her cool hand on his burning eyes and soothed him, but his foot stumbled; then, at last, he thought of turning about.

He flung into the sea a branch which lay at his feet and, pursued by the wind, hurried back; but, in a few seconds, a powerful wave brought the branch to his feet again. Again he took it up and flung it violently into the waves, as if he could rid himself in this way of his unhappy thoughts. Vain endeavour! A few seconds, and the branch was again at his feet. Then the embittered man, in a burst of rage, flung the bit of wood on to a little sand hill, and like a curse sounded his embittered words:

"May the sun dry you, and the fisherman burn you!"

The storm burst over the land and the wind pursued the retreating man with a cloud of sand, and whirled the poor branch into the sea, to be thrust back to land again the next moment. The moon came fitfully out between the clouds and seemed to smile mockingly at his folly.

"Fool! give it up," he muttered, "give it up!"

Then he turned and walked inland, his back towards the village and the wood—away along a solitary path, with the moon overhead struggling among the clouds, the night wind sighing drearily in his ear, seeming always to echo that sullen resolution to the holding fast whereof he was straining all his energies: "Give it up! give it up!"

The next morning she appeared earlier than usual on the verandah of the hotel. He must pass here; here she would say farewell to him. To separate for eleven long months without saying farewell—that would be impossible. Perhaps she had been too hard. He was quite capable of going away without seeing her again. But no—she had often angered him before, and often pacified him; she will do it to-day also.

The minutes passed; one hour after another went by. She wandered restlessly up and down, and looked eagerly right and left. The bell of a steamer was sounding. She started. What a shrill tone! The travellers are streaming in from all sides. The bell rings a second time. She smiled, although a little constrainedly.

"I'm sure he'll stop—he cannot go away in anger."

Then a waiter brings her a letter. She tears it open. There are only a few words.

"Farewell! I have given it up."

That was what she had wished. Given it up! Hateful words, as they stand written there! What does he mean by it? Not a word about a future meeting, not a word about a reconciliation.

The bell rings for the third time. She looks up. A well-known form is hurrying down to the pier. Without a farewell? Without one kind word? Her heart sinks within her. She beckons, she calls.

He does not look round, only hurries forward all the faster. A nameless terror seizes her. What if, the next year, he should really go to Italy? What if some accident should happen to him? What if she should never see him again? She flies down the slippery bank, she rushes after him to the wooden pier.

He sets his foot on the gangway, then feels a touch on his arm. He turns round.

"What is it you wish?" he asks politely.

"Why did you not say goodbye to me?" she gasps out.

"Goodbye," he says coldly, bowing as deeply as the crowd will admit.

She answers neither his farewell nor his bow. She gazes at him with wild, terror-stricken eyes.

"Pass along please!" comes from the deck of the steamer.

He crosses the plank without looking round again and disappears in the crowd on the ship.

Then it seems to her as if she is standing suddenly in another world. The sunshine on the glittering waves, which usually delights her, hurts her eyes. Life and movement, which she generally enjoys, deafen her. She leans wearily against the railing and gazes at the foam beaten up by the wheel of the steamer.

What shall she do here now? What, indeed, is there for her to live for any more? What shall she look forward to, the whole year through? Why should she work, if he is not to praise or blame?

"Given up! Given up!" It seems to sound in her ears, in the working of the engine, in the turning of the wheel, in the rushing of the waters! In all the life and movement about her, she hears only two words: "Given up!"

The gangway is drawn back, and the steamer moves off.

Now she can see him. She will send only one glance towards her fast disappearing happiness, whose full value she has only recognized when she has lost it for ever.

She turns, totters—a strong arm holds her fast. She leans her head on the faithful breast of her friend, and tears, happy tears, stream down over her pale cheeks. Her cold hands rest in his warm ones, and the letter flutters unperceived into the blue waters. It has fulfilled its mission.

Paul Gresham.

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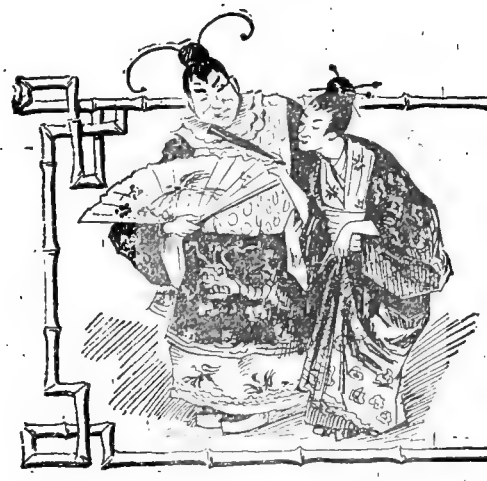

Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

X.—HE MAKES A DISCOVERY WHICH HURTS HIS FEELINGS.

"By George, but there's a chance for some fun!" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Bowser, as he looked up from his evening paper.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Bowser.

"Why, there is to be an entertainment on Saturday evening, in connection with the church round the corner, and a gold-headed cane is to be voted to the most popular man in the town."

"But where is the fun?"

"In getting the cane. I say, we'll be well to the fore, and if I don't come out above all the other candidates, you may call me a goat! It's a fifty shilling cane, and just what I want. You must have known about the entertainment, as you go to that church very often?"

"But you see—" began Mrs. Bowser, and then checked herself.

"What do I see? The cane goes to the most popular man in the town. That conceited old Brown will think he's sure of it, and that assified Jackson will smile and grin and tumble over himself, but they won't be in it with me. It will be just like rolling off a log to win that cane."

"I—I hadn't thought of going," stammered Mrs. Bowser, after awhile.

"Well, you can make up your mind to go. Indeed, I should think you'd be proud to have me carry off the prize. Won't it please you to discover that I'm the most popular man in the town?"

"Y-e-s, of course, but suppose it shouldn't turn out that way?"

"But it's got to turn out that way—got to do it. Haven't I been asked to stand for the next election? Haven't I contributed to the free cake and sick baby funds? Don't we give to every charity, and don't all the children in the street run after me? Why, I gave five pounds in cash to help build that very edifice. If there's a more popular man in the town than I am, I'd like to know him."

"But if you shouldn't get the cane then you'd—you'd——"

"Then I'd what? It looks to me as if you didn't want me to get it. Perhaps you had intended to vote for some other candidate. Well, you go ahead and vote for whom you please, but I'll walk home with that cane just the same. We go to the entertainment on Saturday evening."

For four days and evenings he went about talking of the matter.

That settled it, and Mrs. Bowser had no more objections to offer. Mr. Bowser took hold of the matter in his enthusiastic way. He let it be known that he was in the hands of his friends, and that his friends were expected to vote early and often and pull him through.

For four days and evenings he went about talking of the matter, with the result that "popular candidates" appeared in all directions. Mrs. Bowser had fears and doubts, but whenever she threw out a hint, Mr. Bowser drew himself up and replied:

"I shall get that cane, and don't you worry about it. It looks as if there might be a dozen candidates, but I'll smash 'em to squash as soon as the voting begins. I've

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had no less than seven men ask me if I would stand for mayor next year, and I think I'll allow myself to be nominated."

When the fateful evening finally arrived the Bowsers were on the scene at an early hour. It didn't take Mr. Bowser more than ten minutes to discover that things were not exactly as he had expected. In the first place, it was threepence a vote, and in the next he was a stranger to most of the church people and none of them seemed to have thought of him as a candidate. He soon came upon a stern, severe-looking woman, who asked him:

"I understand that you are Mrs. Bowser's husband, and how does it come that we never see you here of a Sunday with her?"

"I—I am not much of a church-goer," he stammered in explanation.

"That is, you don't feel it a duty to set a good example to others?"

"I hope I am not a bad man."

"Did it ever occur to you that you have a soul?"

"Of course."

"I am afraid it hasn't. Poor Mrs. Bowser! We often talk about and pity her. I don't think our clergyman has quite done his duty. He should call on you and have a serious talk."

A little later on, Mr. Bowser met a male acquaintance who expressed great surprise at seeing him there and asked if he intended to rent a family pew.

"I'm after that cane," was the reply.

"But you—you can't expect to win it."

"I'd like to know why not."

The man looked at him with a pitying expression, but had no explanations to make. A doubt crept into Mr. Bowser's mind for the first time, and he hunted up Mrs. Bowser to say:

"I believe this crowd has made a conspiracy to do me out of that cane."

"I don't think so," she replied, "but suppose we go home? It's crowded and uncomfortable, and I know you're not enjoying yourself."

"When I go home that cane goes with me!" he announced, as he set his jaw. "I'm either the most popular man in the town or I'm not, and it's a good time to find out how I stand."

When the voting for the cane began Mr. Bowser stood all alone. He saw that he was out of it, and Mrs. Bowser made another effort to get him home, but his mind was made up to die game.

He bought a hundred Bowser tickets at one swoop and deposited them in the box, and these put him up far ahead of any other candidate. His period of exultation was a brief one, however. It was the crowd against Bowser, but he was a fighter. He had in his purse £10 and not till the last penny was gone did he abandon the struggle. When the result was made known he found that he had lost by over 200 votes.

"Woman, this is the end."

He made no reply.

"I'm so sorry," whispered Mrs. Bowser, as she followed him out of the place.

"It was awful that you paid out £10 and didn't get the cane after all."

She heard him grinding his teeth, but he answered never a word.

"You are probably the most popular man in town, but they combined against you."

Still not a word.

Side by side they walked home and entered the house, Mr. Bowser turned up the hall gas, hung up his hat, and as Mrs. Bowser sank down into a chair he towered over her and shouted:

"Woman, this is the end."

"W—what do you mean?" she asked.

"You worked your little game well."

"But what did I do?"

"My lawyer will be here by ten o'clock in the morning. You can doubtless have yours meet him at that hour. It won't take long to arrange matters."

"But I—I——"

"That is all, Mrs. Bowser—all except the separation and alimony. As I have some papers to prepare for the office to-morrow I will bid you good night—good night."

"But can't——"

"Good night, Mrs. Bowser!" he repeated as he bowed and retired to the library—"good-night!"

M. Quad.

"Next week: He comes Home Loaded with Plans which Get Rather Upset."

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Jean the Drummer.

THEY tell the story in the little French village to this day, although the events are nearly half a century old. The children learn the story of little Jean just as they do the fables of La Fontaine.

Jean was an orphan; his mother had died when he was quite a baby and the people of the village knew nothing about her, for Jean's father had brought him there when he was about four years old.

At the end of three years his father was found dead on the high road, his death being due to heart disease. Jean had been taken in hand by a small farmer named Blanc, who worked him pretty hard and did not give him over much food.

Jean grew up dull and good for nothing save to look after cows and do odd jobs on the farm, all of which tasks he performed indifferently.

He was the laughing stock of the other children, and the only person who took any interest in him was the worthy village pastor. Jean's gentle, timid manner pleased the old cleric, who used to talk to the boy and tell him the stories about the great heroes of France and other countries.

All the children of Ambert have an inborn love of stories; they will listen by the hour to anyone who can narrate a good yarn which they can understand, and they themselves will repeat these tales to their fellows when there is no older person at hand to amuse them with fresh ones or repetitions of those which have been traditional for generations.

The pastor often gathered a number of the children about him and amused them with tales of Bayard, Charlemagne, Roland of Roncesvalles and Napoleon I.

Jean seldom had the advantage of being one of the group, as Farmer Blanc kept him busily engaged as long as it was daylight.

One evening Jean was driving his master's cows homewards for the day and he passed a knot of children who were listening attentively to an account of the victories of Napoleon the Great told by Henri, the notary's son.

Henri was educated above most of the other children and he was reciting his story in a manner calculated to fix the attention of his hearers. Jean, catching a few words, stopped to listen to the dramatic incidents and allowed his cows to wander a few yards away and there quietly graze.

The story of the great Emperor's victories was intensely interesting to Jean, who listened with dilated eyes and open mouth to the words that fell from the lips of Henri. He followed Napoleon from victory to victory, his thin face glowing with excitement and the cows entirely forgotten.

Just in the midst of an exciting narration of one of the great battles, Jean was rudely awakened from his paradise by an abrupt stop on the part of Henri.

"Look at him," cried the notary's son, pointing with his forefinger to Farmer Blanc's drudge. "Taking it all in, isn't he?"

The other children laughed heartily and some of them jeered at the boy.

"Why don't you look after your cows," inquired another boy. "You will have Old Blanc after you if you don't take care."

"Yes," chimed in Henri, "go on with your work and don't stop here listening to me. What do you know about it?"

"Let me hear the end of it!" pleaded Jean earnestly. "I want to hear how the battle finished."

"I'll tell you what," said Henri, as an idea struck him. "You shall hear the end of it if you will tell us a story afterwards."

There was another laugh at Jean's expense. He was the only child in the village who was not equal to telling a tale of some kind. The bare idea of Jean telling a story to amuse others was too much for the children.

"I can't!" exclaimed Jean in despair. "You know I can't. I can't do anything—except beat the drum."

That was his only accomplishment and it had been taught him by an old soldier who had done some work for Blanc. The veteran had shown the boy how to beat various orders on the bottom of an up-turned kettle or tin can, and Jean had proved himself an adept in this, much to the surprise of most people. He was so dull, they thought, that it was surprising he could learn anything.

But the children cared nothing for Jean's accomplishment in drum beating; stories were their attraction, and as he could not compete with them in this direction they would not allow him to stop and listen.

"Go away!" they told him. "And don't come near us again until you can tell a tale."

Jean was very sad that night when he retired to his resting place in the loft of the old barn, the back of which was near the road. He ate his bread and onions slowly and then seated himself on the floor and gazed

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into space. How he wished he had lived in the time of the Little Corporal and had served under him against his enemies.

He tried to imagine the scene from the words which Henri had uttered, but the result was unsatisfactory. Then he reached out his hand for the old tin can and the broken ladles which served him as drum and sticks respectively and begun to beat the "Charge!" in his most vigorous manner.

This exercise carried him beyond his surroundings. Time after time he went through his whole list until it is a wonder that he did not attract the attention of his master.

He had just finished the series when this thought occurred to him and he began to tremble, for Blanc was not sparing of cuffs. And just then a strong voice reached his ears. "Hallo, there!"

Jean started to his feet in dismay. Who was it? The voice seemed to come from the road, so he crept to the back of the loft, where a small door did duty for a window.

"Hallo!" came the voice again. "Where is the drummer? Who is that beating the drum calls?"

Cautiously opening the little door, Jean looked out towards the road. He was just tall enough to do this, and when the owner of the voice saw the face through the opening, he ordered Jean to come down and bring his drum with him.

Jean descended from the loft and made his way across the intervening space and through a hole in the hedge. Here he found himself confronting a troop of cavalry, to his mingled dismay and delight.

"Hallo, why it's only a child!" cried the leader. It was the same voice that Jean had heard while in the loft. "What have you got there, my little man? A tin can! Is that the drum on which you were performing just now? Who taught you?"

All these questions, uttered in quick tones, confused poor Jean, who was unable to reply. The captain waited an instant for an answer; then grasping the fact that his commanding tone had disturbed the lad's mental equilibrium, he continued more gently and more slowly:

"Come, my little man, tell me how you manage to play on that tin drum so nicely."

Encouraged by the kindly tone now adopted by the captain, the boy explained; and, in answer to further questions, gave a brief account of his life and present conditions. When he had finished, the captain spoke to the officers nearest to him and they conferred together in whispers.

"You are just the boy we want, Jean," said the captain when the consultation was over. "We have lost our drummer by an accident and we are on the look out for another to go with us to Algeria. You are a drummer ready made; will you come with us?"

Jean gasped. Go with them to Algeria—be a soldier and take part in a battle like the soldiers of Napoleon in the story which he had heard from the lips of Henri only two or three hours ago!

He was unable to speak for a few seconds and then he burst forth: "Yes, oh, yes!"

"That's good. Can you ride?"

Jean could ride; he had many times ridden the horses bareback, but he could not hold himself upright in the saddle as those soldiers were doing. He told the captain so, timidly.

"Oh, that is nothing; we will soon teach you how to do that. Can you come with us at once?"

Jean decided that he could. He was lifted up behind one of the men, the word of command was given, and when morning broke there was no trace of Jean in Ambert.

The mystery of Jean's disappearance was the subject of village gossip for a few days and then he was forgotten by all save the pastor. Blanc grumbled a good deal during the first three days and could hardly persuade himself that the boy had gone off without stealing something, but finally he had to admit that nothing was missing.

The people of Ambert heard stirring accounts of the doings in Algeria from time to time, but news circulated much more slowly in those days and the details were very meagre.

It was two years almost to a day after Jean had joined the regiment when the worthy pastor received intelligence of a great fight between the French and the Kabyles, and he quickly communicated it to the inhabitants.

In the evening he gathered some of the children round him in a quiet spot and told them as much as he knew, interspersed with references to his famous heroes, Bayard and others.

He was in the midst of the thrilling account, embellished by his own notions of what had probably occurred, when Henri, who was one of the group, interrupted him and pointed to two uniformed figures which were approaching them.

The pastor turned in that direction, shaded his eyes with his hand and tried to get a good look at the approaching strangers.

One was a tall man with military bearing, evidently a soldier of some years' standing; the other was a boy. The man had his arm in a sling.

"Perhaps they have come from the war," cried Henri, and at this remark all the children gazed with admiration and expectation at the new comers.

No one spoke again until the strangers were within half a dozen yards of the group, and then the younger hurried forward with outstretched hands to the pastor.

"Don't you know me, monsieur le curé," he asked. "I am Jean Godeau. I went away to be a drummer."

Silence for an instant and then a loud cry from all the children as they recognised the boy at whom they had jeered, the boy who could not tell a tale with the rest of them. Then they swarmed round him and his companion, while the good pastor plied the warriors with questions.

It was the old soldier who told the story. They had been in several fights, the last of which had been a great battle with the natives in which the regiment had performed prodigies of valour.

Jean had proved himself a true hero, especially in the last encounter, in which he had beaten the "Charge!" with the utmost coolness while death in various forms was all around him, and had joined in the charge with the men. He had been wounded in that battle.

Both the soldier and the drummer had been invalided home, and the former had undertaken to conduct the latter to Ambert, where Jean hoped to stay.

The Government had granted him an annuity and he was in time to enter one of the great military colleges.

"But why did you not write to me, Jean?" asked the pastor gently. "I have often wondered what had become of you. You can write a little, I know."

"They told me," stammered Jean, looking at the children, "that I was not to go near them again until I could tell a tale—and—I thought I would wait until I could tell one!"

G. Knight.

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To Win Nita.

"NEVER fear, Nita, I shall come back. The saints will protect me! I wish I were as certain that your father would consent to our marriage as I am that I shall return to you unharmed."

But Nita's sobs continued in spite of the attempts of her soldier lover to comfort her.

Paulo Luvoni was a soldier inasmuch as he wore a uniform, but he was in reality one of those volunteers who came forward when Italy declared war against Austria in 1866; he was a young student who, fired with enthusiasm and desirous to liberate his country from the yoke of the foreigner, had rallied to the standard in order to fight the Austrians.

His thirst for glory was rendered more keen by the black prospect ahead of his love affairs; he was deeply enamoured of Nita Marino, the daughter of old Colonel Marino, and the girl was equally fond of him, but the colonel was decidedly averse to the union.

"I am afraid that you will be killed, Paulo," Nita managed to say between her sobs. "If I were sure that you would come back uninjured, I should be happy; for I believe that my father would not withhold his consent to my marrying a hero."

"I shall do my best to cover myself with glory," Paulo assured her with much fervency. "But I don't think we shall have much chance; we shall only be on the frontier and all the fighting will be done elsewhere. And then, I shall probably be in your father's command, and if he doesn't like me—and I know he doesn't—he may not give me a chance."

"But you must try to do something brave, dear Paulo," urged Nita, her sobs ceasing. "Don't lose any chance, and I'm certain that you have an opportunity of making a hero of yourself."

"And you will remain true to me, Nita?"

"Can you possibly doubt it?" inquired Nita reproachfully. "Have I not refused Pietro Borda, although my father favours him?"

It was true, as Paulo well knew; and he endeavoured to atone for his momentary doubt in the usual lover's fashion. And so they parted.

Paulo's forecast of his probable sphere of action proved correct; he was under the command of Colonel Marino and they were stationed in a village at some distance from the actual scene of operations, and with but little chance of doing anything that would make him conspicuous. He was constantly thrown into the company of his rival, who manifested no resentment but rather showed a desire to be very friendly.

This did not appear so surprising to Paulo as it would have done at home; in time of war things alter greatly and enemies become friends.

The colonel was certainly rather hard on Paulo, a fact which was noticed by his comrades and gained him many friends, as oppression always does.

To tell the truth, the men had not a very exalted opinion of the qualifications of the colonel either in the matter of intelligence or in that of bravery; he was more of a carpet soldier, and had mounted the ladder of promotion without actual experience on the battlefield.

These two facts contributed to make Paulo, who was a good-natured fellow, more than ever a favourite with his comrades in arms.

Paulo sighed in vain for the desired opportunity of distinguishing himself; he volunteered for every duty that might lead him into danger, because danger and glory were likely to go together; but whenever he was selected, which was seldom, the task to be performed usually turned out to be a very tame one.

One evening, when he felt more than ordinarily dispirited, he confided his trouble to a man named Marco, a keen-witted fellow a few years his senior.

Marco was one of those men who are always ready with a way out of a difficulty, and just as ready to stand by a friend in a tight place, no matter the risk to himself. In addition to that, he was fond of a joke. Any adventure which promised fun and danger had the greatest charm for him.

"You wish to marry Nita," said Marco reflectively, after a silence of nearly three minutes. "The colonel doesn't want you for a son-in-law, so the thing that remains to be done is to secure his consent by force if he will not give it otherwise. Now, I have a little plan

which I think will work splendidly. We shall want the help of some of the men, but there will be no difficulty about that—most of the men dislike the colonel and like you. Listen!"

They were talking earnestly for several minutes afterwards, and when he rolled himself up in what remained of his blanket that night, Paulo's face wore a more serene expression than it had done since Nita had promised to be his wife.

Colonel Marino was in the habit of taking a ride for a couple of miles or so from the camp in the afternoon, unattended by any of his men; he invariably rode in one direction, whither his fellow officers knew not, but they were quite certain that there was but little risk of his meeting any of the enemy.

On the day after the conversation between Paulo and his friend, Colonel Marino set out for his customary ride, quite unconscious of the fact that some strange looking men in the garb of peasants were waiting for him in a secluded spot about a mile from the encampment.

The horse was trotting easily along the road and the colonel was lost in thought.

It seemed as though fate was playing into the hands of those men in ambush, for as Marino neared their hiding place he allowed the reins to drop loose, and the horse to slacken into a walk

"Halt!"

The word of command was given more with a view to arouse the colonel to a sense of his position than to be literally obeyed, for two men gripped the horse's bridle and brought him to a standstill without giving the officer a chance to do it.

The colonel awoke with a start to find himself hemmed in by a score of peasants, rough looking fellows whom he felt sure were connected with the Austrians.

They addressed him in a dialect which he was able to understand, and communicated to him the unpleasant intelligence that he was in the hands of men who intended to execute him at short notice.

"I protest!" he exclaimed indignantly.

He tried to draw a pistol, but his arm was seized and he was dragged violently from his horse and towards a neighbouring tree.

"You have captured me, but you must treat me as a prisoner of war!" cried Marino.

The situation was a decidedly uncomfortable one even for a man of bravery, but for Marino, who had not shown conspicuous gallantry, it was much worse. His cheeks were pale and his voice trembled, possibly with rage, but more probably with fear.

The men mumbled something in reply, but did not desist from their work of tying his arms by his sides.

Marino protested vigorously, but the men paid no heed.

He was placed against a tree, a noose was passed over his head and the other end of the rope thrown over a stout branch.

Colonel Marino felt that his last moments had come and looked about him anxiously for some indication of approaching help. Had he been calm enough to observe the men more closely, it might have struck him that they also were on the look-out for somebody.

At any rate, they did not appear to be in such a hurry with the final stages of their work.

Presently there was a sound of hoofs and from a narrow by-lane a few yards distant there came a mounted soldier who wore the uniform of Marino's regiment.

Without a moment's hesitation the new comer rode straight at the peasants, uttering loud cries which were intended to indicate a bloodthirsty desire to hack the lot of them into little pieces.

The peasants lost their courage at once and turned to flee from the daring rider, leaving the colonel unharmed; but judge of their dismay when a number of men in the uniform of Marino's regiment came scrambling through the hedges and fell upon them.

The rider pulled up his horse in amazement, while the peasants made no attempt to defend themselves but ran off as quickly as they could in all directions.

Then the rider, who was none other than Paulo Luvoni, saw the leader of the rescuers hurry towards the colonel, and he recognised Pietro Borda, his rival.

Many thoughts flashed swiftly through Paulo's brain. He guessed that in some way Pietro had learnt of the little scheme concocted by Marco and himself, and had enlisted the services of some of the men to enable him to upset the plan, and at the same time ingratiate himself more with the colonel.

He understood that the pseudo peasants did not care to defend themselves, lest their disguise should be penetrated and they should be arrested for an attempt on the life or person of their commanding officer. As to himself, he had been so far outwitted in playing the part of rescuer, but he might yet obtain some favour, unless——

Paulo turned cold; suppose Pietro knew all the plot and should inform the colonel of all the circumstances, including Paulo's complicity!

However, he must play the part as boldly as possible. He dismounted, and made his way towards Marino, who was now free of his bonds. He was met half-way by Pietro, who smiled sarcastically.

"Are you going to tell the colonel how it was you came up in time to rescue him?" asked Pietro meaningly. "I think you had better keep in the background as much as possible, or the colonel may put you under arrest."

For a moment Paulo hesitated.

An idea had struck him which seemed to promise an opportunity of partly turning the tables on Pietro, but he felt that it was not possible to entirely nullify the advantage gained by the other, and he decided to utilise his knowledge to effect a compromise.

"If you knew the scheme, why did you not warn the colonel instead of allowing him to be waylaid and then save him?" asked Paulo just as meaningly. "You hoped to gain the same advantage by what you did, as I hoped to gain by carrying out this little plot. Pietro, if you say anything of what you know, you must bring about your own downfall. If you speak, I shall not hesitate to have my say, whatever comes of it. We have both fooled the colonel, and you have gained on the whole more than I. Let us agree to get this affair over with as few words as possible."

Pietro saw the force of the argument at once and he agreed. He went back to the colonel, while Paulo remained in the background and had to be content with a share of the general thanks and to allow Pietro to take the foremost place. But the latter had to be very modest or Paulo would have betrayed all.

Marco looked very crestfallen when he heard the result of the plot, but he endeavoured to encourage Paulo by telling him that there would probably be other opportunities before they went back to their homes.

"You need not fear that it will become known," he said. "Our friends will not say anything about it.

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because that would lead to their own punishment, and, from what I can hear, the men who helped Pietro are quite innocent and know nothing whatever of the real facts. Pietro has certainly gained some advantage over you, but we will hope for the best. Your time will come, and you know the old saying that he laughs best who laughs last."

But Paulo was not so hopeful, and for several days he had scarcely a word to say to anyone; he was so moody and irritable that his friends—at least, those not in the plot—could scarcely recognise in him the light-hearted Paulo Luvoni of other days. But it is the unexpected that happens, and so it was in the case of Nita's favoured lover.

A change of plans on the part of the Italian commander caused Marino's regiment and other troops to be pushed forward, and ere long they were in touch with the enemy.

Paulo began to feel more hopeful of a chance to distinguish himself, and his hopes were realised within two days after reaching the new post.

It was early in the morning, just before daybreak, when the camp was thrown into some confusion by firing from the outposts, who, unexpectedly attacked, fell back upon the main body. It was an attack in some force and the enemy was upon them before they were fairly aroused.

In the sharp fight which followed, Colonel Marino showed himself to be a man of better mettle than had been anticipated; he rallied his men in good style and encouraged them by word and deed.

In the midst of the action a sudden rush on the part of the enemy left the colonel and two or there men alone to fight for their lives against more than twenty Austrians.

The next instant Marino's sword arm fell useless by his side and two of the enemy rushed at him to send him to his last account, but one of the men who was with him sprang in front of Marino and felled the two antagonists in rapid succession with the butt of his rifle; then, forming a little circle, with the colonel in the centre, the men prepared to sell their lives dearly.

Another rush and it was the turn of the Austrians to be swept back, and the little group of Italians were safe.

The fight raged for another hour and resulted in the defeat of the Austrians.

Paulo's opportunity had come and his triumph was assured.

Colonel Marino was so charmed by the young man's gallantry, and so thankful that his life had been saved, that, with true Italian impulsiveness, his enmity turned to affection, and without being asked he informed Paulo that he should have the hand of Nita so soon as the war was over.

As for Pietro, he was captured by the enemy during that same engagement and held prisoner until the conclusion of hostilities.

He returned to his native town just in time to hear the bells ring for the marriage of Nita and Paulo.

G. Day.

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Briton or Boer?

By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

For years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

CHAPTER XLV. (*continued*).

It was already getting dusk, and yet that ring of heroes, though shrinking every moment, was still unbroken and seemingly unbreakable, and Sergeant Bethell, who had just taken part in a charge that had been anything but a success, came to the conclusion that it was time to take some more decided action.

As a matter of fact he had been thinking seriously on the subject for some time past, and he had come to a conclusion which seemed to offer certain possible chances of success, and so, while the men who had got back alive from the charge were pulling themselves together, he trotted his horse up alongside Major Bryan's and said, just as though he had been making a most ordinary proposition:

"Say, Major, seems to me we'll never get the old man out alive like this. Those chaps may be all they're supposed to be, but they're real grit. If they'd been raised in old Kintuck' itself they couldn't have stood up and made a squarer fight than they have done. It's going to come down dark soon, and I reckon it's about time to take stronger measures."

The portly form of Oom Paul fell on to a heap of dead men.

"It's against orders, Bethell. *We* can't," said Major Bryan rather curtly, for he was not in anything like a good humour at the repulse of the charge which he had detached himself from his own men to take part in. "The only stronger measures would be the use of attillery, and that's forbidden."

"That's so, Major, and you know I'd be a long way behind in disobeying orders, but what's the matter with roping the old man out?"

"With what?"

"With roping him out. Perhaps you never saw me use a lariat, did you? Well, I've got a regular beaut' of a one in my kit that I used to use when I was cow-punching out West. I always go around with it, and I've never had a chance of using it yet, but I guess there's a good one here. If you'll just come with me out of the scrimmage for a bit I'll show you in two shakes of a lamb's tail how it is done."

"If you can," said the Major, "I think I can promise that it shall mean promotion before you leave the field."

"Suits me down to the ground, Major, or, anyhow, it will if I live for another half-hour. Now come along and I'll tell you."

It was about fifteen minutes later that the result of Sergeant Bethell's cogitation began to be made manifest. General Carrington had been interviewed, and said, with his usual brevity:

"Yes, there'll be a commission and £500 for you if you can do it without killing him."

To which Sergeant Bethell, with equal brevity and directness, had replied:

"I'm there, General. It'll be that or a funeral," and had mounted and ridden away.

The next development of the idea was the appearance on the scene of action about four hundred yards from the southern front of the irregular square into which the last remnant of the army of the Transvaal had now resolved itself, of two bodies of a dozen men of the Matabele Legion coming on at a run, crouching close down to the ground, and drawing by ropes a light "galloping" Maxim.

Behind them was a small and select body of mounted men, including the erstwhile Rhodesian troopers, Hinton and Dempsey, and Corporal James Anson of the Lancers.

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Just a little in front of them was Sergeant Bethell, with a coil of hair-rope hung carelessly over his left arm.

As soon as the Maxim stopped in obedience to the word "halt," Major Bryan, who had followed it at a run, took his place on the saddle-seat. The cartridge-ribbon was already in its place, and the ammunition box, carried alongside by two dusky runners, was dropped into position beside it. Major Bryan gave one quick, searching glance to see that all was right, and just as the Boers' rifles came up he lowered the muzzle, pressed the spring, and let go.

The volley that should have killed every man about the gun flew wild, for the Maxim bullets got there first. Aiming no higher than the knees, he slowly swept the front face of the square with a stream of bullets for the space of about five seconds. Men and horses went down maimed and helpless, and lay writhing and crippled on the ground.

Then the Maxim stopped. Its roar was succeeded by a rapid tramp of hoofs, and Sergeant Bethell's voice, ringing out with a twang that might have pierced the ears of a graven image.

"Come on, boys. If I go over, unhitch and get back. Same for everyone else."

Then into the big, ragged gap that had been made by the Maxim fire, the four desperate men rode at a gallop in close order abreast. With sabre and revolver they cut and fought their way to within a dozen yards of where the President was still sitting upon his horse. As they came on the old man brought his rifle to his shoulder and let fly, but at the wrong man.

"I'm done, matey. Here's my bit of the rope," Trooper Dempsey gasped as he reeled back in his saddle, holding out with the last effort of his life the end of a raw hide rope to his chum, Hinton, who was riding by his side. But even as he rolled from his saddle a coil of rope swung once round Sergeant Bethell's head and then, like a long thin snake, sprang out towards the President.

"Fixed him! Right about—gallop!" the big Yankee screamed as he pulled his horse round. "Hold tight, boys! The old man's heavy."

Then there came a sudden jerk and a hard strain on the rope, and then the portly form of Oom Paul seemed to leap from the saddle and fall on to a little heap of dead and dying men beside him.

All this had happened in about the same time that one could put a cartridge in the breech of a rifle. Those who had been near enough to the President to see what had happened were for the moment paralysed by the suddenness and utterly unexpected nature of the attack. The first to recover himself was Captain Eloff. He brought his rifle up, took a quick sight at the broad back of Sergeant Bethell and pulled the trigger. The empty click of the bolt-spring told him that the magazine was empty. There was no time even to slip a single cartridge into the chamber, so he dropped his rifle and made a spring forward, with both hands extended, and caught the Yankee's horse by the bridle just as it was forcing ahead through the press with its trailing load behind it.

The next instant a revolver barrel was at his head.

"Let go, young man."

"Nay, Verdom, nay!"

"Sorry."

Bang.

The next instant as brave a man as had ever lost his life for another was lying under the horses' feet with a bullet through his brain. The next there rang out a hoarse yell such as could only have come from Caledonian throats, and three hundred of the Cape Highlanders with levelled bayonets dashed into the broken face of the square. A stream of flame ran along the rifle muzzles, and as man and horse went down before the rain of bullets, the line of steel swept on, opening for a moment as it passed the three troopers and the still prostrate President, and at once closing up on the other side

"Guess we've got the old gentleman sure now," said Sergeant Bethell, as he put the strain on the rope again.

"I'd reckon we'd best tote him gently out of here, so that he doesn't get hurt, and then we'll take him to the General."

EPILOGUE.

"United Africa."

Early on the morning of the twelfth day after the sun had set on the Waterloo of Africa, every window and balcony, every porch, and even housetop, that overlooked or even afforded a distant view of the Kerk Plein in Pretoria and the streets leading to it was filled with people—some jubilant and triumphant, some sullen, sad, and angry, and some cynically indifferent, but all, save these last few, waiting in eager anticipation for the curtain to rise on the last act of the South African tragedy.

Princess Vavara stood with her new acquaintance.

Just at the corner of the balcony of the Grand Hotel stood a little group of people, each of whom had, willingly or unwillingly, directly and indirectly, taken no small share in the work whose consummation they were about to witness. Princess Vavara stood between her father and the Baron, and beside her was a new acquaintance, whose fresh frank, open beauty heightened by the keen breezes of the veld and the ardent kisses of the African sun, formed a striking and delightful contrast to the paler and more chastened loveliness of the daughter of a hostile race who was just then so sweetly and frankly congratulating her on the part she had played in the drama which had begun at Krügersdorp but three short months before—for this was the girl who had taken that wild night-ride from her ruined and desolated home near Puri across country to the Pioneer Road, and had guided General Carrington back to the scene of his first victory over the invading Boers.

She had followed the army of the North through all its battles and journeyings since then, nursing the sick and wounded, and using all those gentle arts with which the tenderness of woman loves to soften the sternness of man's warfare, and now in the hour of victory she was finding the reward of her devotion, not only in the triumph of her race and nation, but also in the knowledge that among all the heroes of the campaign none had done harder work or won more honest honour than the bronzed and soldierly lover whom she was so soon to call by an even dearer name.

As for the Prince and Princess, they waited for the pageant that was to come with the calm, good-humoured resignation of skilled and practised gamblers who had

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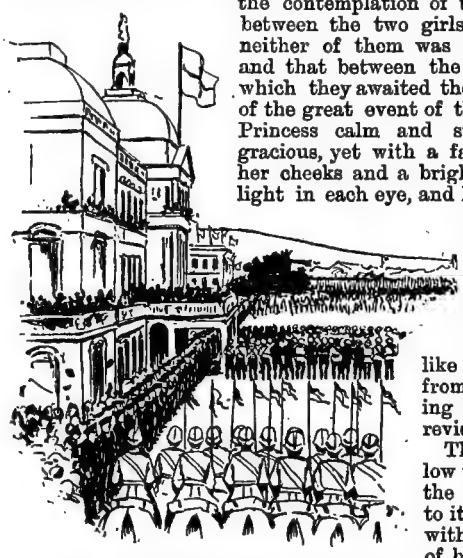
played for a very big stake and lost it through no fault or failing of their own.

Their mission had been a failure, and they frankly acknowledged the fact. Had victory inclined to the other side, Russia would by this time have been clearing a way for herself through the chaos which must have followed the triumph of those who might have won but could never have held, and in that case Prince Paul would have added one more success to the long list of brilliant achievements which distinguished his diplomatic career.

As it was, by the irony of Fate he and his daughter had unconsciously contributed to the defeat of those by whose victory they could alone have profited. If they had never gained the confidence of Mr. Secretary Leyds, and through him that of the Executive of the Transvaal, everything might have been different. If Russian intrigue had not prevented the arrival of the German squadron in Delagoa Bay, and if Prince Paul's telegram to Michael Ostroff had not brought in Admiral Tcherkoff's instead, Admiral Dale would not have captured those all-important telegrams and dispatches which had revealed the whole of the vast plot against the supremacy of Britain in South Africa, and had enabled those who, without actually appearing on the scene of strife, had used their genius and their gold to confound the intriguers, and to bring men and ships and materials of war into Sonth Africa just in time to save the loyalists from seemingly certain defeat.

The Baron was naturally in the best of humours with himself and all the world. He had played a difficult game with consummate skill, and won it, and in doing so he had checkmated one of the most skilful diplomatists in Europe, without even awaking his suspicions until it was too late. In fact, the triumph of that day was in no small measure his, and, therefore, no one had a better right to enjoy it.

Major Bryan had delivered his sweetheart into the Baron's care until his military duties should be over for the day, and the really kindly heart of the man, as distinguished from the cool and calculating diplomatist, was charmed by the contemplation of the contrast between the two girls, for really neither of them was much more, and that between the attitude in which they awaited the beginning of the great event of the day—the Princess calm and smiling and gracious, yet with a faint flush on her cheeks and a bright spark of light in each eye, and Madge Morrison, all akindle with excitement and genuine, undisguised delight, like a girl fresh from school waiting for a great review to begin.



The Guard of Honour wheeled into the square.

The square below them and all the approaches to it were lined with long ranks of bronzed, stalwart men, in the simple, practical, and yet picturesque uniforms of the Northern trooper forces, and the sun, which had dissipated the wonted clouds of the rainy season as though for the express purpose of lending an added splendour to the spectacle, glittered brilliantly on thousands of bayonets and brightly-polished horse-trappings.

In front of the Raadzaal a great oblong space extending past the end of the church down to the other side of the square was kept clear by treble ranks of the Leicestershire, York and Lancaster, the West Riding, Middlesex, and Hampshire Regiments, and in the centre stood the massed regimental bands. Kerk Street West, towards the President's house, was lined by two long ranks of the Cape Highlanders. Out of deference to the feelings of the conquered people, the Basutos had been sent home immediately after the battle of Amajuba, and the Matabele Legion had been left behind at the ruins of Elandsfontein, while a thousand men of the Naval Brigade were drawn up on either side of the great porch of the Government building.

Just as the clock of the Raadzaal struck the first stroke of ten Madge Morrison pointed across the square past the corner of the Standard Bank and cried:

"Ah, here they come at last!"

Then blending with the clang of the bell there came the skirl of bagpipes and the stirring strains of "The Campbells are Coming," and then the tramp of hoofs and the jingle of accoutrements. Thousands of eyes were turned simultaneously on the end of Kerk Street.

Then the pipers of the Cape Highlanders strode into the square. After them came the heads of two columns of Lancers and Hussars forming the Guard of Honour, and between them rode Sir Charles Warren in the uniform of a Major-General of the Royal Engineers, with General Goodenough on his right and General Carrington on his left, and followed by a brilliant staff of officers.

It was a glorious contrast to that outwardly similar scene on April 5th, 1881, when Sir Evelyn Wood entered Pretoria—then a British town about to be given over to England's enemies under the terms of a disgraceful peace following on a shameful defeat.

The two lines of the Guard of Honour wheeled into the square, one to the right, and the other to the left. The pipers halted beside the bands, the rattle of steel trembled shrilly through the air as thousands of bayoneted rifles came up to the present, and the three Generals with their staff strode up to the front of the Raadzaal portico and dismounted. All this while the four-coloured flag of the Republic, whose last hour had just struck, had been flying from the top of the great flagstaff above the portico in front of the central dome.

Standing bareheaded between his brother commanders, in the midst of three sides of a square formed by the officers of his staff, Sir Charles Warren read the Royal Warrant appointing him Her Majesty's High Commissioner for South Africa, and Governor of Cape Colony in the place of Lord Rosmead, who had resigned an office which the logical result of his fatal policy had made it impossible for him to retain.

Then, in the name of the Queen-Empress and in virtue of the powers conferred upon him, Sir Charles read a proclamation declaring the Orange Free State and the South African Republic to be from that day integral portions of Her Majesty's South African dominions and subject to the Government of Cape Colony.

As the last of the momentous words left his lips the Vierkleur fluttered down from the flagstaff, and in the midst of breathless silence a ball of silk ran up in its place. Every eye was turned upon it as it rose. Then Sir Charles Warren, taking a few paces forward, said in a loud voice that rang clearly through the stillness that had fallen upon the assembled multitude:

"Officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of Her Majesty's forces in South Africa, seventeen years ago the distinguished officer who now holds the exalted position of Commander-in-Chief of the British Army declared, standing almost on this very spot, that as long as the sun shone the British flag should continue to wave over the territory of the Transvaal.

"In consequence of circumstances to which there is here no occasion to allude that promise was broken, but broken

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through no fault of any loyal man who ever bore arms for the British Crown in South Africa. To-day we have come to redeem it. You, by your valour and discipline and the patriotism which has brought thousands of you from the ends of the earth to the protection of your loyal fellow-subjects here, have made it possible for me to renew that pledge.

"The Queen's authority is now unquestioned from the Zambesi to the Cape—may God preserve it so until the days of Her Majesty's remotest successors, and may the troubles and sorrows, the divisions and the strifes which have hitherto torn and desolated South Africa cease from now for ever! God save the Queen!"

The same instant the ball at the top of the flagstaff burst, and the scarlet and gold blazonry of the Royal Standard floated out on the breeze and glittered in the bright sunshine which seemed to greet it so gladly. Then the massed bands of the regiments struck up the opening bars of the National Anthem, the serried lines of the troops stiffened into almost statuesque rigidity, and as the strains of the music died away the guns of the forts which were to have made Pretoria impregnable, but which had never fired a shot in warfare, thundered out a royal salute echoed by a roar of cheers; and when these, too, had died away, the Princess laid her hand on the Prince's arm and said with a little tremour of real emotion in her voice:

"We have lost, my father, but we have been conquered by men. Yes, they may be world-pirates and robbers of the earth, but these English are men after all!"

After the final collapse of the Boer power in the second Battle of Amajuba, and the proclamation of Her Majesty's authority over what had been the two Republics, the pacification of Africa was speedily completed, and a new era of prosperity immediately dawned.

The terrible lessons of the brief but bloody war were this time not learnt in vain. A standing army of twenty-five thousand men was formed of the regular colonial troops, backed by a reserve of thirty thousand of the loyal burghers, and five native regiments, foremost among which was Major, now Colonel, Bryan's redoubtable Matabele Legion.

A permanent South African squadron composed of six first and second-class battleships, twelve cruisers, twenty-five destroyers and torpedo boats held the waters from Wallfisch Bay to the Pungué River, which, with Delagoa Bay, had been purchased from the Portuguese Government.

By a momentous coincidence, which perhaps was not all coincidence, the news of the crowning victory of Amajuba was published in the English newspapers the day after the British Premier, in the name of now united Britain, had thrown down the gauntlet to the combination of Powers which had sought, and sought too long successfully, to coerce the Empire into a shameful submission. From the pinnacle of her splendid isolation, Britain had thrown her glove in the face of Europe, and Europe had suddenly discovered that it had too much to do with its own jealousies and conflicting ambitions to take the challenge up, for in the hour of South Africa's need the voice of Greater Britain had spoken and told Europe in unmistakable accents that it would have to meet, not a single nation, but a whole race in arms.

The claims of Russia for the destruction of one of her ships and the capture of the rest of her squadron in British waters were submitted to arbitration, and a fair price was paid by the British Government. Ex-President Kruger, Vice-President Joubert, and Mr. Secretary Leyds were conveyed to Cape Town and there impeached on a charge of high treason, culminating in armed revolt against the Suzerain Power, and in obedience to the sentence pronounced by the court through the mouth of Her Majesty's High Commissioner, they were placed on board the *St. George* and deported to the island of St. Helena—there to remain during her Majesty's pleasure, and to meditate, perhaps by the spot in which had once rested the remains of the great Napoleon, on the dangers of overweening ambition, and the real strength of that mighty Power whose generosity they had flouted, and whose long forebearance they had mistaken for weakness.

THE END.

A NEW SERIAL STORY

BY GEORGE C. WALLIS

Will begin in next week's SHORT STORIES. It is entitled:

"EINAR OF THE LONG SWORD."

. . A VIKING STORY . .

The author was responsible for "The Winning of Gunhild" "The Gladiator," and other tales which have appeared in SHORT STORIES from time to time.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Fortune's My Foe," by J. Bloundelle Burton, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. L. Loynes, 43 Allesley Street, Birmingham. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with FUNNY STORIES ABOUT CATS, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, June 18th, Post-cards only, please.

Rather Irish.

An amusing incident recently occurred in an important southern town in connection with the departure of the local reservists for the front.

The men were escorted to the railway-station by a vast number of people, foremost among whom was the mayor, a gentleman more generally known for his generous heart and kindly disposition than for his educational attainments.

In the course of the farewell speech, he said "the reservists might leave for the seat of war without anxiety as to the welfare of those who were near and dear to them, as these would be amply provided for, and that when they returned from the war they would find that their widows and orphans had been well looked after in their absence."

L. L.

Rather Much Kindness.

In the far North of Scotland a gentleman recently called on an old lady, on behalf of the South African Refugees' Fund.

"You will recollect," began the visitor, cheerily, "that you asked me to call again in a week's time. I trust I may now have your subscription."

"That you will, my guid man; sic misery I never heard o'! I've been saving up ever since I saw you."

And the kindly old soul tripped back to the kitchen, and returned with a big bundle.

"Noo, noo, sir, dinna bother to thank me, but see the Boers don't get it. There's scones, and tatties, and——"

But the collector had fled.

J. A.

Not Killed.

The following good story is related by a private who went through the battle of Elandslaagte:

"After the fight had been going on some little time, I saw my sergeant stagger backwards, throw up his arms, and fall to the ground. I leant over him.

"'I am wounded,' he gurgled.

"'Where?'

"'In the throat. I am dying.'

"An examination, however, proved the sergeant to be unhurt. The ball had really struck him in the neck, but had bounded off his collar, the shock choking him for the moment. As the truth dawned on him, his face lit up with joy; and he went into the fight again, white, but determined."

G. W. H

Good Enough to Practise On.

"Stop! Don't shoot!" cried an excited sandy-whiskered man, who was trying to hide behind a boulder several sizes too small for him, "I'm not a Boer; I'm an American."

"Don't excite yerself, me ol'y," retorted Mike, of the Dublin Fusiliers. "You are good enough to practise on, anyway."

And business went on as usual.

H. E. L.

Commandeered.

One morning a few weeks ago a soldier entered the camp at Modder River leading a scraggy-looking goat by a piece of string. His entrance was the signal for a burst of laughter from his comrades.

"What ho, Dick!" cried one of them. "Wot 'ave you got there? 'Ave you stolen it?"

"Stolen it be blowed!" said Dick. "I've commandeered it, an' left my blooming receipt chalked on a tree."

H. C.

"Biltong."

A Boer who was taken prisoner in one of the recent battles, got to talking with one of his gaolers. After the conversation had gone on for some little time the prisoner took something out of his pocket which looked like plug tobacco, and, biting off a piece, offered it to his gaoler.

The gaoler informed him that he did not "chew," whereupon the Boer surprised him by saying that it was not tobacco but "biltong" (dried meat).

B. E.

A Boer Cigar.

A young subaltern who had only just learnt to smoke before joining the service was the victim of a nice trick on the part of his brother officers.

The regiment had been ordered to South Africa, and soon after its arrival at Capetown one of the officers went to a tobacconist's and bought the biggest and strongest cigar to be obtained.

On his arrival at the camp again he offered to give five shillings to anyone who would smoke the cigar to the very end.

The subaltern, not wishing to let the officers know that he had not learnt to smoke long, at once accepted the offer, and actually did smoke the cigar to the end, but ever since then he has not cared to see cigars anywhere near him.

T. P.

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With Lights.

Two Dublin Fusiliers, on their first night of camping out, were much annoyed by mosquitoes. So they decided to put out the light and cover their heads over.

After a while one of them peeped cautiously out, and seeing some fireflies glittering in the darkness, said:

"It's no good, Pat; here they are again, and, bedad, they've brought lights to find us." M. C.

Kruger's Change.

"HAVE you heard the latest about the war?" said a young boy to his father.

"Well, what is it, Jim?" asked the father.

"Kruger asked the Queen to change a sovereign," said Jimmy.

"And did she do it?"

"Well, yes, she did, and she sent it out in 'Bobs,' don't you know."

E. R. P.

A Smart Tommy.

WHILE the Boers have been so cunning in the present war it is gratifying to know that our Tommy is also full of resource and ingenuity.

An amusing instance of the above actually occurred outside Ladysmith during the attack on that place.

A Tommy had been captured by a party of Boers, who were in the line of fire from the British troops, and they were conveying their prisoner towards their own position when he suddenly threw up his arms and, with a cry of agony, pitched forward on his face.

The Boers, thinking he was done for, and the bullets from the British getting unpleasant, gave their captive a parting kick and left him.

So soon as they were gone, however, the supposed-wounded Tommy got up on his feet and walked back to his lines, leisurely smoking one of his late captors' pipes which had been dropped in their hurry to get out of the line of fire.

T. B.

Identified.

MANY people strongly suspected that Widow Ware's soldier son, whose virtues she extolled so persistently, was a creation of her fancy, for no one had ever seen him in the neighbourhood, and some were ready to swear that she had never had any boys.

One day, to test her, a practical joker brought her a photograph of some soldiers in Natal, and, pointing out a young fellow, whose whiskers had run riot over his face, and whose name was not given, asked her if she recognised her son.

"My son!" gasped the widow, who couldn't read a word of the text. "That's never my Jimmy, is it?"

"It says Private James Ware, son of Betty Ware, anyhow," the wag gravely assured her, "so I reckon it must be your boy."

The widow gazed at the picture with admirably-feigned earnestness, and then clapped her hands in delight.

"So it is!" she cried rapturously. "It takes more than a beard to cheat a mother's eye. I can tell him by the dimple in his chin."

R. A. H. G.

The Colonel's Mistake.

A REGIMENT quartered in Scotland had among them an expert gymnast, who taught his brother subalterns how to walk across the barrack room on their hands.

While thus engaged the other evening the door opened, and the colonel, a strict disciplinarian, entered the room, gazed attentively at the inverted company, shook his head gravely, and departed without uttering a word.

Extra parade duty was the least punishment expected for this breach of discipline.

Some days passed, however, and no notice being taken, it was thought an apology and explanation should be offered by the prime instigator of these unsoldierlike movements.

A reference being made to the memorable night, the colonel amazed the intending apologist by exclaiming:

"Hush! my dear fellow, I would not have anybody know it for the world. The fact is, I had been dining out with an old brother officer who had served with me in India, and, 'pon my life, I had no idea the wine could have had such an effect upon me; but when I looked in to see if you were all right in your quarters, I could have sworn that I saw you all upside down!"

T. P.

Nothing Else to Laugh At.

THE old major was a hot-tempered man. Something in the kitchen had displeased him and he was letting everybody know it. He happened to glance at his seven year-old heir just in time to catch him smiling.

"What are you laughing at?" roared dad. "I don't want people round me grinning because I object to the way things are done and state my wishes plainly. Are you laughing at me, you young imp?"

"No, dad," replied the boy meekly.

He had really smiled at the way the cat had scampered from the room when the head of the family pranced on her tail.

"Then what are you laughing at?" asked dad, more angry than ever. "There's nothing else in the room to laugh at, is there?"

Then he saw his wife smile, and he made things so lively that a reporter who was passing thought he was on the track of a first-class murder, and climbed over the area rails and got into the front room in his eagerness to secure a good report.

H. J.

Why She Wept.

A CERTAIN young lieutenant living in Harborne had a dreadful experience some weeks ago. He had not been married long, and his wife (whom no one could insult by calling "domesticated"), owing to the temporary absence of the "general," had to cook her first dinner on this occasion.

The husband arrived at one o'clock, but, instead of finding the mid-day meal, found his wife crying bitterly.

"Mary!" he said with astonishment, "whatever is the matter?"

"Oh, John!" she said between her sobs, "the dinner won't be ready till three o'clock. That horrid tradesman has sent me a rabbit to cook. It came at nine o'clock, and it has taken me from then until now to pluck it!"

John is expected to soon regain his mental balance.

Q. R. F.

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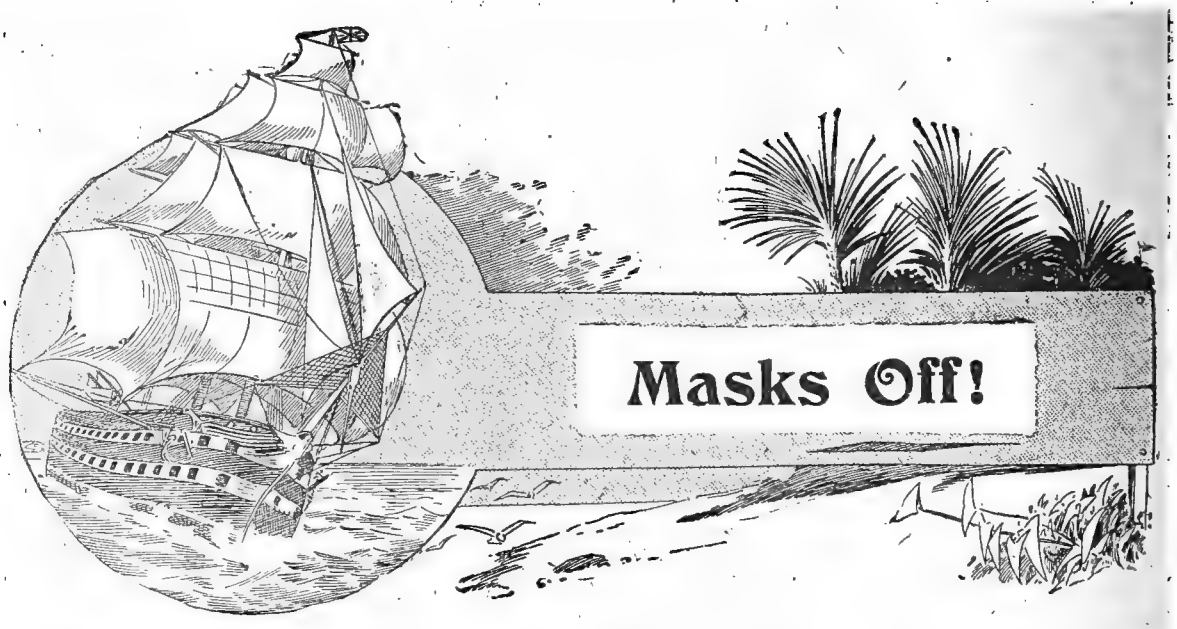

Masks Off!

THEIR friendship was not ordinary gush and girlish outpouring. It had stood the test of time, and because there is so much to be said after a long absence, twilight shadows filled the room before the girl had finished the story of her new-found happiness.

As she moved across the room she paused at the door and turned.

"My *fiancé* will dine with us this evening, so make yourself beautiful, Lilian. No," with a decisive shake of her beautiful head. "I won't tell you his name, or say another word. We will be late for dinner."

Judith's guest was leaning back in a great chair that made her look absurdly young and childish as Judith's *fiancé* entered the drawing-room unannounced.

He only knew that a pair of dark-lashed, blue-gray eyes looked steadily into his, that a sweet, mocking mouth uttered some formal words of greeting, that for an instant he held the slim cool fingers, when he found himself in the dining-room.

The evening was not a success, and yet it would have been hard to tell wherein the failure lay.

Judith before retiring, in that hour of woman's confidences, spoke to her friend about it.

"You were as courteous as possible, my dear; but I felt that you did not like Lewis."

"Judith!"

Her guest turned from the mirror. She was brushing the pretty tendrils of soft hair that curled so wilfully about her brow. "If anything went wrong to-night it was my fault. I am tired. To-morrow I will do my best to redeem it."

But Judith was not content. She questioned Ellington a few days later.

"You do not like my friend," she said sorrowfully. "How can you be indifferent to her charm, Lewis?"

"I am not," he answered gallantly. "Miss Morrison has a trick of lifting her brows, as you do, and the voices are not unlike. How did I never hear of her?"

"That is easily explained. She has been abroad since we left boarding-school nearly five years ago. You and I have not discussed old schoolmates." She smiled charmingly. "But you have not told me why you dislike her."

"I have given you no reason to think I do."

"But you do," she persisted.

"No, Judith. I do not like Miss Morrison." She had not before detected the weariness in his voice.

Such a perplexed young hostess presided over affairs the next few days. Lilian herself came to the rescue and proposed a house-party. And after that there were picnics, drives and boating parties in gay succession.

The first night of September found the gaiety at its height.

A masquerade dance was in progress. It was the night preceding the departure of Judith's guests. Even Lilian was to go.

Not far from midnight Ellington moved restlessly through the winding walks.

He held a mask in his hand, for the night was hot. The denseness of the shadows, the luminousness of the stars, the coolness after the heated atmosphere of the ballroom, were grateful to him.

Strange how that snatch of verse throbbed and surged through his brain: "For me who can never be thine."

How the words repeated themselves! 'Twas the night, the sound of the dancers' feet, the clash of music. As he paused under a small balcony, a fan, a dainty thing, brushed his face and fell at his feet. A woman leaned over the balcony. He could see the gleam of her white throat and bare arms.

"Are you, too, weary of the dance?" he asked, as he returned the fan.

She made some light reply.

"Miss Morrison!" She noticed the quick change in his voice. "You leave us to-morrow. May I not bid you good-bye?"

"Are you, then, so anxious to see me go?" Did he

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imagine it, or was there a reproach in her voice? He drew nearer.

"The dancers, the garden, the music as it comes to us here, of what does it make you think? You will not tell me? Then, whether you like it or not, I will tell you. I will make it clear between us. Fate has brought us to this balcony.

"Have you forgotten the old garden there beyond the sea"—he caught her hands—"and that last night when I told you of my love? You sent me from you coldy, but I knew you cared."

"Have you forgotten Judith?" The sweet voice sounded harsh. She drew her hands from him and stood erect.

"You know I have been true to her," passionately. "I will never speak like this again. Judith has told me the story—a simple one. A quiet sea, a sudden squall, an overturned boat; but it left you free. Free—while I wandered over the earth trying to forget and for ever haunted by the wraith of a girl with sunny hair and wistful blue-grey eyes. Why did I not know? It was not doubt, you could not doubt me. Answer, Lilian."

She leant against the railing. She did not speak.

"There could be many excuses," bitterly.

"I was in Egypt, but letters would have reached me. 'Twas, then, reserve. You could not. I laughed when Judith told me your lover's death had spoiled your life."

Still the girl uttered no word.

He leant upon the railing. "I am going now." His voice had grown tender. "I would do nothing that would bring regret to you or her. I may not touch you, but I love you! I love you! I love you! Going, and you stand there as if you were turned to stone! You will not say the words for which my heart has hungered? But once, dear."

"Once and for ever hold my breath," she gasped. "Then I love you!"

He laughed in low content. "Good-bye," he said, although he did not move. "Good-bye."

He turned to go.

"Lewis," her voice was almost a whisper, "ask her to release you. Tell her tenderly. Perhaps it will not hurt much. If it fails, touch her pride."

He looked at her incredulously. "I cannot!"

"Then you do not love—"

"I will not pain her so. We are inured to pain."

He looked out over the garden. Unconsciously he crushed in his grasp a rose that grew on the balcony.

How the struggle swayed in the soul of the woman who stood so near him! How the inner voice wrangled with her! "Renounce him. Renounce him! He is hers! He is mine! He loves her! Let him go! I will not! The mistake is his! Renounce—quick—before it is too late!"

He leant toward her. "Forgive me, my sweet, and—good-bye. It is good-bye this time."

For answer she leant forward and touched his brow with her lips. "It is out of your hands," she said. "Go to her." She slipped the mask from her face.

"Judith!" hoarsely. "How could you! The voice is ——"

"You deceived yourself," she said, gently, "and the awakening is better now. Words cannot undo what has been said. Leave me, please."

There was a tone in her voice he could not disobey. Without a word he left her.

* * * * *

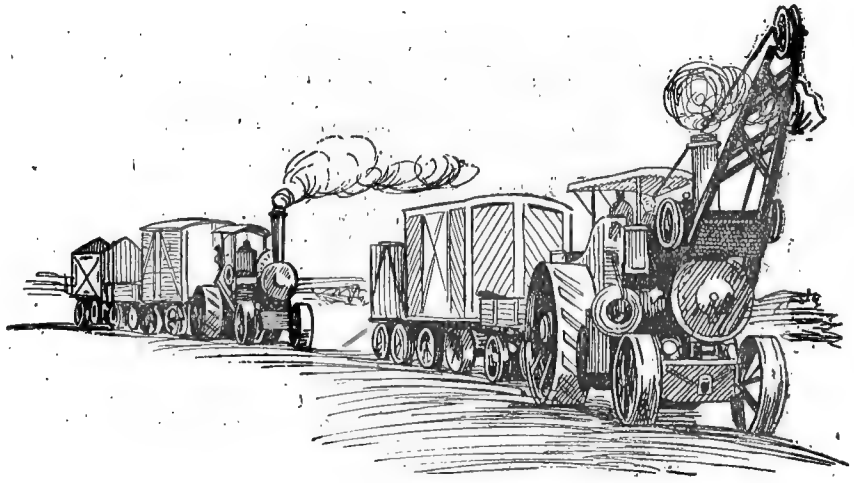
The moon was coming large and full over the hills. It brought her figure out of the dark.

The river moved far below her like a flash of silver between its walls.

The beauty, the passion of the night shook her to the soul.

She stood silently, her lips moved as if in prayer; when she turned to go back to her guests the light that illumined her face was not from the moon.

T. A. Peters.



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On Love's Altar.

TWENTY years ago there was in a Mexican-Spanish town of Mexico a dancing hall known as the Tivoli Alegre. It was not a swell place, by any means. For it was built mostly of rough sun-dried clay bricks, and the floors and tables and stage were of the roughest kind.

But, being cheap, it was much patronised by the Mexican haciendados from the sugar plantations round about, who hadn't many pesos to spend in amusement, the poorly paid clerks in the tiendas, and the assayers and other *employées* from the Santa Cruz mine.

Being an American-owned mine, the Santa Cruz men were mostly Americans—young fellows fresh from engineering colleges and the like.

And Santa Cruz not being the liveliest place in the world, they were in the habit of turning themselves loose on occasions in this same dancing hall—even to George Hewitt, the chief engineer, who was an Englishman, and who, being older and more experienced than the others, should have known better, but evidently didn't.

"La Conchita," or "Little Shell," was the star of the place, and admired alike by Mexicans, Spaniards and Gringos. And no wonder, either, for Concha was as good and sweet as she was pretty.

All the Americans and Britishers in the place had made love to her; mostly by means of pantomime and sighs, not knowing the Spanish to otherwise express their feelings.

But even those who could talk her language were frowned upon by Concha—to none of them would she have anything to say. And as for the Mexicans and Spaniards—in despair they had long ago retired, to worship at other shrines. Of a truth, Concha was *dificil*. Mr. George Hewitt, the engineer, found it otherwise. As a matter of form, more than anything else, he had sent many bunches of big poppies and crimson roses to the pretty dancer, likewise taking his drinks during the evening close to the ricketty stage on which she, with true Spanish grace and *verve*, danced the exquisite Spanish "jota," and, to please the Mexicans, the "jarabe."

As a matter of form only—it could not mean anything. For he was engaged to a girl, home in England, as sweet and fresh as a white violet. While poor little Concha—well, even though a dancing girl does happen to be good, she rarely gets the reputation, and no one could liken the "Little Shell" to a violet. More was she like the flaring, glowing crimson of her country's cactus flower.

But Concha, no doubt attracted by Hewitt's cool indifference, fell wildly in love with him. And, whatever else she knew, control, hiding of one's feelings, was not therein counted; even from her passing glance at Hewitt, one could tell. Though, for that matter, he was the last to know.

Men are proverbially blind, and perhaps he would never have suspected had not a cynical friend imparted the information. Naturally, Hewitt was shocked—he had done nothing to win the girl's fancy; why should she be fond of him? However, so long as she was, well! If a woman cares for you, you can't be rude to her.

Following out his theory that letting a woman see a great deal of you often cures her fondness, Hewitt began to bestow some of his idle moments on the pretty Concha.

To his surprise, he found that she was as thoroughly pure and sweet-minded as his own *fiancée* at home. Of course, she had no mind, no training, no education to speak of, and of the Anglo-Saxon belief that a man's wife should be his friend, companion and helpmate she had no conception.

To her, the man one loves is a Superior Mortal (with capitals) to be worshipped, waited upon, indulged, petted and comforted to the last degree. One of the customs of the dark ages, as Hewitt amusedly thought, but still a pleasant one. For without doubt it was soothing to a man to occasionally find a woman who could think of him alone; whose few leisure hours were spent in devising plans for his comfort and amusement, and who even thought it the best of all good things to merely be allowed to gaze at and worship him.

Probably, some men would have found it embarrassing. Hewitt didn't! For more and more of his time was spent with Concha, until at last the old aunt who cared for her and watched her by day and by night, hinted openly at the matter of marriage. Concha laughed—she had not thought of marriage! Of course, she had no doubt but what it would be, later—people who truly loved each other always married! And loving her as did "the brave Englishman," surely he would be as wretched away from her as she would be without him. In truth, she was too happy in merely loving the man to think or care for the future.

Antonio, her cousin, did think about it, however, being a "Gachupin" of some business sense, besides having a deep and not altogether selfish passion for his little cousin. He had always loved her and her oft-repeated

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"No" to him had been the cause, as she was many times reminded, of his taking to tequila and cognac. And even after her refusal, and though he was wildly jealous of the Englishman, he still had Concha's good at heart, as he told himself. So that, after watching the two for awhile, it appeared to him that it would be well to find out just how matters stood, and what Hewitt's intentions were—in the interest of Concha.

It was the night of the "Noche Bueno." The town was gay with the green, white, and red colours, and the halls, plazas, and dancing halls were adorned with flowers and streamers.

Over in the Tivoli Alegre Spanish and Mexican colours were mingled in the greatest harmony, likewise groups of Spanish haciendados from Can Vincente, and Mexicans from the Santa Ana.

La Conchita had just finished the "Jarabe," with wild shouts of applause and "Buenos" from the audience, the latter being more than usually enthusiastic on account of also being more than usually tipsy.

Even Hewitt himself, in his corner near the stage, felt more sentimental than was customary with him and gazed tenderly after the small, crimson-clad figure of Concha, as she disappeared *en route* to her dressing-room.

He waited to have another copita before joining her, however, thinking that she would thereby have more time to get wrapped up and be ready for him when he did come.

He was going to take her home afterwards and talk to her for an hour or so—longer she would not permit. So, after tossing off the copita of brandy, he lit a cigarette and moved off towards the dressing-room.

A strangled shriek of "Dios Mio! Help!" reached him as he turned the corner. Thinking it came from the dancing room he paid no attention. It was repeated and he recognized Concha's voice. He ran to her room. She was struggling in the furious grasp of Antonio, who was swearing by all the saints that she should never marry the foreigner; she must marry him—Antonio, who loved her. To the devil with the Englishman.

Infuriated beyond all control, Hewitt flung himself upon the drunken Mexican and slammed him against the wall, shaking him as a terrier would a rat.

Panting, with his eyes gleaming murderously, Antonio made no resistance whatever for a moment.

Suddenly, however, he made a spring forward and Hewitt felt something cold and sharp just graze his coat—a machete, the Mexican dog! And, though he never knew how it happened and could never account for it, in the twinkling of an eye, that same machete was in his own grasp and he was thrusting it straight home to the heart of the would-be murderer.

There was only a sickening gurgle, a last dying oath and Antonio, in a limp, bleeding heap, fell dying on the floor. It was over so soon, and Hewitt, as he stared at the dead man, could not grasp what it meant—that he had really killed Antonio.

Concha had crouched, trembling and sobbing, watching it all with terror-stricken face. Now she moved and came forward weakly to Hewitt, throwing her arms round his heaving shoulders.

"You must go, my love," she whispered, brokenly. "It is dangerous—they will kill you. Then go—but quickly—run!"

She knew the danger, as Hewitt could not.

His first thought was to brave it out.

He had not meant to kill Antonio—he could get off free. But how could he prove it? Concha loved him—her testimony would not be taken! Besides, he, an Englishman, had killed a Mexican, and whether rightfully or not would never be considered.

As he began to realise what it meant, Hewitt shivered.

There would be no trial—no show whatever. A lynching party, or perhaps a stab in the dark. Because vengeance is of the Mexicans!

There was no time to lose if he meant going. Now, they were all drunk, as Concha whispered, and would know nothing. He would have time to escape. But in the morning it would be different. Oh, he must go—flee!

As they embraced for good-bye, Concha murmured, weeping, that she would always be faithful—waiting for him until he came. And wrought up to a high pitch, as he realised at last how the girl loved him, Hewitt swore that he would return. And then, with a last kiss, he went. And she knew that he would go back to his office in London.

Then Concha knelt down by the dead Antonio, wetting her skirt in the blood, because she had caught the sound of approaching footsteps—soon it would be known and Hewitt would be pursued, caught—killed! They should never take him—her beloved—first they should take her—her life, if need be!

It all came out as she had thought. Hewitt got safely out of the way, but she was tried and convicted for the murder of her cousin, Antonio. It means hanging, or a life sentence, generally, but in view of the circumstances, and her youth and heretofore perfect character, Concha got only twenty-five years in San Juan. She accepted gladly—for the Englishman. And before imprisonment, she was allowed to write Hewitt, telling him that she would love him always and would wait for him and marry him in twenty-five years.

She knew that no answer would come to her in San Juan, but she wanted to write him of her constancy. Hewitt, of course, would have understood had he received her letter, which being addressed simply to Senor Hewitt, Londres, Ingleterra, never reached him.

But Concha, believing that everybody in London, from the Prime Minister down to the train porters, must know her sweetheart, and would deliver her letter, went gladly to serve out her prison term, believing firmly that in twenty-five years he would come. And that is what has kept her alive—and sane! For that, however, few women die in San Juan, in spite of the yellow fever—more often they go mad.

Hewitt, in the meantime, his wild oats sown, has married his sweetheart (with money) and is a most exemplary husband.

At rare intervals he thinks of Santa Cruz and Concha and wonders what was her fate. Possibly married to some brute of a Mexican, he thinks, who beats and otherwise illtreats her. And, of course, she is fat and ungainly and has a moustache. That being the very last straw, he says pityingly, "Poor little Conchita" and promptly forgets all about her.

Meanwhile in the prison of San Juan de Ulloa, Concha waits.

A. Merie.

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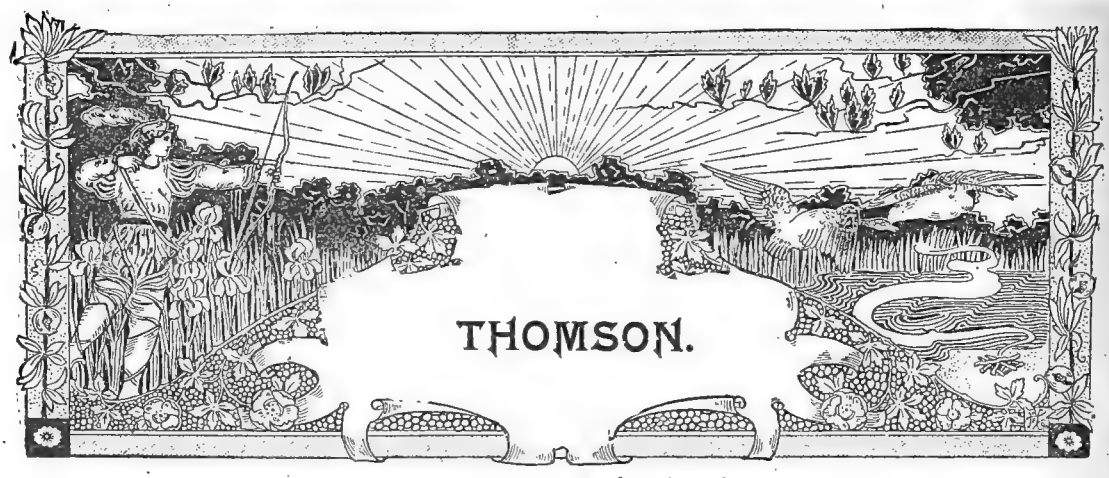

THOMSON.

YES, I liked that part of London and I should probably have called Mrs. Miller my landlady to this day had it not been for Thomson.

I never could conceive any valid reason why they thought so much of him; personally I simply loathed the wretch. Directly I saw him enter the room with those greenish eyes, which his black coat seemed to show up more brightly, I felt an almost unconquerable desire to throw a chair at him. I was only restrained from such an action by the knowledge that I didn't dare do it. I should have had all the ladies in the house on my unlucky head at one time.

It was a pleasant house in the extreme west of the metropolis; a large house, and there were many of us who enjoyed the hospitality of Mrs. Miller—by paying for it. It was convenient for me, as the train service to the City was very good and I had not the slightest desire to make any change. But I couldn't stand Thomson.

The landlady's paying guests—that's how she styled us—included more ladies than gentlemen, but that was rather an inducement to stay.

When we had dinner together in the evening it was much more agreeable than taking a meal at a restaurant in the City or alone in one's rooms, and I liked it.

I was occasionally bored by Mrs. Hedger, an elderly lady who was in a perpetual state of alarm lest there should be a fire, and sometimes Johnson, one of the gentlemen, insisted on becoming intimate enough to borrow five shillings, but these were details of little importance.

I usually quieted the lady by explaining in a learned manner that the attraction of gravity would operate in her favour in the event of a conflagration and she might rest assured that she would reach the ground very quickly; my reason for saying that was that she was very stout, but she did not comprehend it in that light, which was fortunate for me. Johnson, too, never failed to pay that five shillings; I didn't let him.

Mrs. Miller was an agreeable kind of woman and did her best to make everybody comfortable. She would now and then speak lengthily and confidentially about people who had resided with her previously; all very nice persons, they were, so she said in their manners, although in a few instances their morals had not been on the same level, for they had deceived her by their very geniality. She omitted to say whether she had deceived any of her guests in a similar fashion. Still, she acted honourably so far as I was concerned.

But the happiness of my stay in Mrs. Miller's desirable residence was marred by Thomson. I called him my pet aversion. I could not understand what the ladies saw in him, but they seemed to think that he was an incomparable creature. I made enquiries one day of Mrs. Hedger.

"Whatever can you see in Thomson to make you think so much of him?" I asked.

She looked at me in amazement and then replied:

"All the ladies like him!"

That was hardly an answer to my question, but I recognised that it was feminine logic.

"Do all the gentleman like him?" I questioned further.

"I think that is rather a foolish question, Mr. Blundell," she retorted. "We don't expect the gentlemen to share our views about Thomson."

I had to admit to myself that this last remark really was logical, and I changed the conversation.

There was no doubt that the ladies thought a great deal of Thomson, and he took advantage of it. I have seen him sitting on the couch by the side of Mrs. Mortimer and quite close to her. No other man in the establishment would have dared to try the same thing.

I remember once, when I felt in a particularly ecstatic frame of mind, venturing to take a seat near Miss Temple, a lady of about thirty summers, who had unconsciously succeeded in creating a tender feeling within my manly breast, but she quickly reminded me of what I was doing; and I may add that the tender feeling vanished from that moment.

But never a word was said to Thomson, yet I actually saw his face and Miss Temple's *very* close to one another. That is as much as I am prepared to swear to, but my own candid opinion is that she had kissed him.

And the way that wretch walked about the place! If he had been the proprietor of the establishment, he could not have put on more airs. Thomson was the only one in the place who could do as he liked.

I am sure that no one else would have ventured to sing in such a loud voice so late at night as Thomson did. But he seemed to think a great deal of his voice to judge by the way he used it. I made no hesitation inexpressing a preference for a railway engine whistle

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Now, I may fairly claim to have led a quiet and respectable existence. I am out late sometimes, when I go to a theatre, but I never entered Mrs. Miller's palatial residence looking as though I had been in a brawl. Yet Thomson—well. I have seen him come in bearing indisputable signs of having taken a prominent part in a scrimmage. Was it tolerated? Why, I have seen them make even more fuss of him on those occasions!

I fancy that Thomson's character would not have borne a very strict investigation. I had serious doubts concerning his honesty, but I was never able to catch him in the act of purloining anything. I caught him once just outside my door, which was open; I would have given more than a little to kick him all the way down to the drawing-room, but prudence is the better part of valour.

Nothing in my room to steal? I flatter myself that I had made my room look vrey nice; I had a lot of knick-knacks about, and that bowl of gold fish was quite a set-off to the den.

I believe that my antipathy to Thomson was reciprocated, for the wretch always kept a wary eye upon me and looked as though he would like to spring at my throat. He would show his teeth and swear—yes, he indulged in very bad language, but in justice to him I must say that I never heard him swear in the presence of the ladies. That was not very surprising, seeing that they did their best to make him feel pleased with himself.

My desire to do some mischief to Thomson decided me to give notice; I felt that there would be trouble if one of us didn't go. But on the very day which I had fixed for making this important communication to my inestimable landlady, a Mrs. Gray and her daughter came to stay with us. One look at Violet Gray caused me to change my mind.

At the end of three days Violet and I were on the best of terms. She was a most charming young lady and our tastes were common in many respects, notably with reference to Thomson. She was the only woman in the house who didn't like him, and that made me love her all the more.

"I detest him!" she said to me vehemently. "What anyone can see to admire in him I cannot imagine. I wouldn't go near the brute for a gold church!"

I was so pleased with this remark that I was on the point of asking her then and there whether she would have any objection to going to an ordinary church with another brute—meaning myself, of course. If I had said that in the way—the way—oh, you know! She would have said that I was not to call myself a brute, as I was—and then it would have been all so lovely, and the only thing to be done was to ask mamma. But we were interrupted just at the critical moment. Thomson walked in, followed by Miss Temple. A month slipped by and Thomson brought about a catastrophe.

I occupied a room on the third floor and overlooking the garden, which was a fairly large one. The Grays had rooms on the first floor, also at the back, and they could step out on to a balcony.

One evening after we had retired, I was seated near the open window musing on things in general; it was a warm night, and I was not much inclined to sleep. I was awakened from my reverie with a start by catching the sound of Violet's voice and I arose from my chair and looked out of the window.

I did it very quietly, as I did not wish her to suppose that I was playing the spy, but I could not resist the temptation of having a last look at my Sweet Violet, which was my pet name for her.

I could see her on the balcony, leaning over as though trying to see someone in the garden. Then I was electrified by hearing her softly calling "Thomson."

I thought that my ears must have deceived me. She had expressed such aversion to Thomson only a short time previously.

I know that it is a woman's privilege to change her mind, but I don't think that Violet had any mind to change—I mean that I thought her aversion was too deep-rooted. But no, it was true, for she repeated the name.

I drew my head in and walked into the middle of the room in order to breathe aloud. What I breathed aloud is better left unsaid.

Then I went back to the window. Thomson was on the balcony with Violet Gray!

I paced up and down my room for quite half-an-hour, by which time Violet had withdrawn from the balcony and Thomson had vanished. I peered into the gloom of the garden in an endeavour to trace his presence, and after straining my eyes for a couple of minutes I saw his figure in the centre of a neatly-arranged plot.

A murderous desire seized me and I looked round for something heavy and hard. I remembered a sample glazed brick which a business colleague had thrust upon me with the remark that it would ornament my writing table or serve to pound some of Mrs. Miller's cake.

I remember placing it on my table that same evening and wondering why I had been so foolish as to burden myself with it. But the ways of fate are strange, and evidently fate had intended to provide me with something to wreak my vengeance upon Thomson.

It was just the thing, and as no one knew that I had it, there would be no fear of detection on that side.

I gently raised the sash a little higher and took good aim, then I launched the missile on its fell errand. A second later I heard a faint cry and I smiled grimly. That brick had been useful.

There was terrible consternation among the ladies the next morning.

Mrs. Hedger met me with a pocket handkerchief in her hand and tears in her eyes, and asked me if I had heard. She spoke as if there was only one dreadful thing that could occur.

Thomson she told me, had been the victim of a dastardly outrage; someone had thrown a brick at him and had injured him severely on the head. It was just a chance whether he would get over it.

Now that the thing was done I dreaded detection; otherwise I should undoubtedly have betrayed myself by exhibiting some indication of fiendish glee. But fear conquered the more pleasant sensation.

I had to pretend to be much upset by the intelligence, but I refused an invitation to go and look at the victim. I felt that I must keep away from them all as much as possible; I would have left the house for ever without the least delay, but that would have created suspicion.

I caught an earlier train than usual, and I was detained at the office that evening. A fortnight later I gave notice. I fancy they were not particularly sorry that I was going. Violet and I were very cool towards each other. Thomson was still alive.

Did Violet marry Thomson? Good gracious, no! Mrs. Miller had him stuffed when he died. Thomson was a cat. Whatever did you think he was? He was called Thomson to distinguish him from his father, Tom, a former pet of the house who disappeared one night and was never seen again. They may have spelt it Thomson but I don't think so.

D. J.

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A QUESTION OF HONOUR.

THE student world of Heidelberg at large desired particularly to learn why Karl von Lanenberg, a man known to have some of the best blood of Bavaria in his veins, so tamely endured the covert affronts repeatedly offered him by a disappointed rival in lecture room, restaurant and theatre. And when, covert affront passing into frank insult, Halm finally met Lanenberg's courteous "good morning" at the Cafe Muller with a sneer and an audible mutter of "Coward!" the smouldering fires of suspicion sprung at once into flame.

That small body of his fellow-students which still clung to belief in Lanenberg, the most brilliant student of his year, crowded round him with eager exclamations of "You must punish this!" "You will!" "You'll send him a challenge instantly!" "I'll carry it gladly." "And I." "And I—" a dozen voices clamoured at once.

"Gentlemen, my good friends," Lanenberg in the midst, spoke with white lips and dilated nostrils. "I am infinitely obliged to you. But I cannot avail myself, at present, of your kind services. My life, for the next year to come, is not my own."

The crowd fell back. On every face was consternation mingled with half-incredulous disgust.

"This passes belief!" Otto Mayer, an acknowledged leader among his fellows, muttered. "Have you a conscientious objection to duelling?"

"No."

"Is he mad or drunk, Rosenheim?" Poor Rosenheim shook his fair head ruefully. "Or—only afraid? Thunder and lightning, Lanenberg! Explain yourself, man!"

Lanenberg moistened his dry lips. "I have explained. This is a question of honour with me. If you are not satisfied——"

"Satisfied!" They caught up the word, and flung it to and fro to an accompaniment of derisive laughter. "Satisfied!"

Out of the Cafe Muller Karl von Lanenberg passed that day to social outer darkness. Thenceforward the sons of the university, which had been so proud of him, knew him no more. He walked the streets of Heidelberg an outcast, whom no man might salute by the way.

Rosenheim, indeed, perplexed but faithful, would have walked at his side, but Karl brusquely declined the boy's company.

"A bad reputation is contagious," he said. "You must think of your degree."

A few weeks taught Fritz the cogency of his reasoning. The university authorities were popularly supposed to ignore "student prejudices," but it was clear that they had no mind to support a lecturer whom his pupils considered socially "tabu."

They allowed it to become known that Lanenberg would not be reappointed to his present office.

"So be it! Who cares what they do—at the end of the year?" Lanenberg told himself, as he strode to the poor lodgings he shared with a widowed mother. Just on the doorstep he paused to give thanks that his mother went abroad so seldom. Only the needs of her little household drew her now and then from her hiding place.

Returning from one of these enforced expeditions into town, she descended upon her son with the stern inquiry:

"What is this I hear of a quarrel between you and some man called Halm? Have you forgotten your pledge?"

Karl raised a haggard face from his papers.

"No, I have not forgotten."

"Till that pledge is redeemed," the mother continued, almost fiercely, her thin cheeks flushing, her tall figure trembling with suppressed passion, "you have no right to run any risks."

"Make your mind easy, mother. I run no risks till my task is done."

He continued to work hard—as hack, translator, law-copyist—so hard that any woman not absorbed in one fixed idea would surely have cried out upon him for killing himself. He did not die, however; the Lanenbergs are a sturdy race. Denying himself food and sleep, going forth every morning to the endurance of insults he might not resent, this latter-day descendant of the Teutonic knights won his way through those nine terrible months, and could announce his task "done" at their close. Frau von Lanenberg sat down and wept. "Thank God! your brother's a free man at last," she sobbed.

"And—so am I," was Karl's significant rejoinder. "Therefore I'll go round and see Rosenheim."

He went; four hours later Rosenheim returned the visit. Bursting impetuously into his friend's little working room, he cried, in a lamentable voice:

"It's no use, old chap. He utterly declines to meet you—won't even read your challenge. Mayer and the rest support him. Oh, I beg pardon! I didn't see—"

What Rosenheim had failed to see was a tall and strikingly handsome young man in guardsman's uniform, who, emerging from a cloud of tobacco smoke, said briefly·

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"Introduce me." Whereupon Karl muttered thickly:

"My brother Berthold; you've heard of Fritz Rosenheim?"

"Assuredly, and I'll be much obliged to him if he'll kindly explain the significance of the extraordinary message he brings you."

Rosenheim, with many falterings, explained and Berthold von Lanenberg listened, his face growing gray like that of a man under sharp physical torture.

At length he sprang up.

"Take me to these fellows; I'll make them hear reason."

"No, Karl," shaking off his brother, who would have interposed, "this is my affair. I claim to act—if only as the head of the family."

Young Fritz spent the next ten minutes protesting his unshaken faith in Karl. But Berthold von Lanenberg spoke not a word until he had entered the room where Gottfried Halm sat smoking with a dozen of his peers. Then, having formally presented himself, he begged to know Herr Halm's grounds for declining his brother's challenge.

Halm leaned back supercilliously in his chair. "The challenge, Herr Lieutenant, was long on the way."

"Yes!" Berthold thundered. "Do you know why it tarried? I will tell you."

All faces turned eagerly to the pale speaker.

"The tale's a short one. I am a poor man condemned to associate with rich men. Like other poor men similarly circumstanced, I got into difficulties, I committed an act which once known must have ended my career."

A pause. Berthold took breath and went on deliberately.

"The person wronged by that act, a distant relative of my own, speedily discovered that he had been defrauded. He offered not to publish his discovery on one condition—that the money should be repaid him within two years. My brother, aware that I was powerless to accept this condition (a soldier has no opportunity of earning money) came forward and accepted it in my name. He succeeded in fulfilling it—yesterday."

A slight movement among the listening group.

"To gain this success he has sacrificed everything he holds dearest.

"Rather than run any risk of breaking his word, he, a Lanenberg, has suffered men to call him—coward!"

There the apologist's voice broke suddenly and Gottfried Halm sprang to his feet.

"No man shall ever call him so again in my hearing!" he cried. "I'm ready to ask his pardon."

"We shall all crave leave to do that," Otto Mayer put in. "And then—to thank his brother for telling us a story which we have (I speak for every one present) always forgotten. It seems, sir," he added, turning with a courteous inclination to Berthold, "that courage of the highest kind is common in your family."

G. J. JOHNSON.

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THE SEA'S RESTITUTION.

The third day out from Havre a fog came up and made the world opaque. For two days it did not lift nor thin, and it was difficult to believe, in spite of the log, that the ship was making any headway at all. It seemed almost as if the world had ceased to be, or as if it existed but in a state of flux, and as if we, enchanted ones, accursed with an immunity from the common destruction, were left to contemplate the nothingness.

Then, to add to our sense of doom, a young baby was said to have died on shipboard.

At first, everyone took it for granted that its mother must have been a steerage, or, at the least, a second cabin passenger. It seemed unlikely that death would be so impertinent as to enter the first cabin.

But it was learned that the destroyer had been even more insolent than that—it had taken a child much favoured of fortune, the heir to great wealth.

I went to visit Mrs. Morell, the child's mother. She was tall and white, with wide eyes, which must have been beautiful when she was happy. Now a sort of blankness, like that of the air and the sea, had come into them.

I could not see her soul for her sorrow. She offered no confidence; indeed, my sympathy could not reach to her dulled senses. Her grief was between us, impenetrable as the fog through which the ship crept cautiously.

"The Captain asked me if I would be willing to have my baby buried at sea," she said to me, in a voice which reminded me of a mournful bell, "and I told him I had no objection whatever."

"No?" I ejaculated in amazed surprise.

"Nothing is more peaceful than the deeps of the sea," she responded, and it being night, she asked me to walk upon the deck with her under cover of the darkness.

More in sympathy than from curiosity I inquired:

"Your husband is awaiting you in America?"

"Yes," she replied, her voice strangely colourless. "He will be on the landing-stage. He will expect to see the baby in my arms. He has never seen the baby, you know. I have been with my mother, who lives in Paris, and the day that baby was three months old I started for the States."

We paused by the bulwark, and she looked down into the shadowy trough of the wave.

"It will make a soft cradle," she said.

Her courage wrung my heart.

"Where do you find the strength to endure such a grief?" I cried.

"Indeed," she responded, with the mournful shadow of a smile, "that I cannot tell. It does not seem as if it were really I who has met with this great misfortune. If it were I whose plans have been so altered and whose hopes have been so dashed, surely I would not be tearless like this. It is Adele, my nurse, who weeps."

The next morning the Captain read the burial service with solemn accent, and into the colourless sea, through the white vacancy of the fog, the little one was lowered reverently.

I stood beside the mother, and I would have sustained her with my arm, but that she gently repulsed me. She swayed a little from side to side, but there were no tears on the face that looked out of the quaint pointed hood of her sea cloak.

She stared ahead of her, at the stupid fog—she looked, baffled, into obscurity.

Suddenly, an hour after the funeral, the mist lifted. It rolled up as a curtain rolls up, and it was a saffron colour, gleaming and splendid.

When it had lifted a sparkling sea was revealed and a cloudless sky. The world became radiant. It seemed to exult in its beauty. Mrs. Morrell cast a look of reproach at this vaunting of nature's youth and joy and went to her cabin.

Though the day messages were sent her and delicate evidences of sympathy, but her maid alone returned thanks.

The next morning found her still in seclusion. More than one of us thought of invading that sacred solititude, but at last forebore.

It was the afternoon of that day that the man on the bridge espied an object upon the horizon at the south. It was a black speck visible in a short time to all of us.

"It's a ship's long boat," was the verdict at last. "It is manned and flying a flag of distress."

The course of our ship was changed. We went racing through the green water, rejoicing in the zest of the hour—in the action, the event.

Presently we were standing off cautiously from a long boat manned with haggard men.

"Who are you?" shouted the Captain, as the companon ladder was being lowered.

"All that is left of the crew and passengers of the *Nina Celeste*, sir."

"How lost?"

"By fire, sir, two nights ago. The first boat lowered capsized. The women—there were two—were lowered into it. But the men were frightened, the flames made such headway, so they jumped. We are all who remain. Three of us were picked up from the overturned boat. But the others were dragged down in the swirl of the boat—it got to going round and round."

"What was the *Nina Celeste?*"

"A freighter, sir, bound from Bermuda to New York, carrying a cargo of lilies and hemp. It was out of its course owing to a fog."

The boat's load came on board—fifteen pale men—and one of them carried something in his arms.

"What have you got there?" asked the Captain. "Is it a child?"

"Yes, sir. It is the babe of one of the women who was lost. I was just about to hand it down to her——"

There was a sharp cry from among the crowd of passengers. Mrs. Morell was coming forward, her arms outstretched. She was entirely unconscious of the crowd, apparently. Someone whispered to the man who held the babe:

"Her little one was buried yesterday at sea."

The man shuffled his burden awkwardly in his arms and took his hat from his head. Mrs. Morell reached him, and her hands seemed to hover above the coverings of the child's face, as an avid bee hovers above a flower.

"It is alive!" she half-whispered, after she had bent above it all trembling. "It is breathing!" It seemed as if she thought that fact a sort of miracle.

She lifted the babe eagerly from the man's arms, and straining it close to her, walked with rapid, uncertain steps toward her cabin, and, as she went, she, who had hitherto shed no tears, sobbed aloud.

C. T. H.

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If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, June 25th, 1900.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution.

Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 142.

Prove that seven is the half of twelve.

No. 143.

The following letters duly arranged will form a well-known proverb:

AA C EEE FF HH IIII M N OOO P RR SS TTTTT

No. 144.

Place the nine digits in three rows in such a way that, by adding them together, up, down, across, or diagonally, they shall always make fifteen.

No. 145.

A box has nine ears of corn in it. A squirrel carries out three ears a day, and it takes him nine days to carry the corn all out. How is this explained?

No. 146.

Take away my last seven letters and I am a useful article. Without my first six I am an article of commerce. Minus my last four I am a desirable thing. Without my first seven I am a portion of the body. My whole is an important branch of education.

No. 147.

My initials, read downwards, will form the name of one of Shakespeare's characters:

A GIRL'S NAME. A FRUIT. A FISH. A TOWN IN SCOTLAND. A FAMOUS EXPLORER. A COUNTRY IN ASIA. A FLOWER. A PRECIOUS STONE.

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 118 to 123.

The prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Mr. Edward Fitzgerald, 7 Tuckey Street, Cork, whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

Each of the following have been awarded a copy of "Hagar of Homerton," by H. E. Dudeney:

Miss A. Wilson, Governor's House, Dorchester.
G. W. Hurst, 2 Claremount Terrace, Hextable, Kent.
C. Cavill, 25 Gladys Street, Lightbowne Road, Moston, Manchester.
A. Mallinson, Tindal Villas, Brentwood Road, Romford.
Miss Gertrude Moir, Wycar House, Bedale, Yorkshire.
W. E. Griffiths, 30 Spital Square, E.
J. B. Johnson, Technical Institute, Crewe.
P. Mepham, 109 High Street, New Brompton.
Miss Peggy Cadden, 11 New City Road, Glasgow.
E. J. Bloom, 90 Warham Road, Harringay, N.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 124 to 129.

No. 124. 792.

No. 125.

S T E A L
E A G L E
A N G L E

No. 126. The host would supply 5040 dinners at half-a-crown and would consequently lose £490.

No. 127.

M e A t
D r A m
G o A t
S a C k
A c R e

MADAGASCAR.

No. 128. "He who loses money loses much; he who loses a friend loses more; but he who loses his spirits loses all."

No. 129. Ascension Island.

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By "A Mere Man." With Sketches by "Yorick." Crown 8vo. Cloth, price 3s. 6d.

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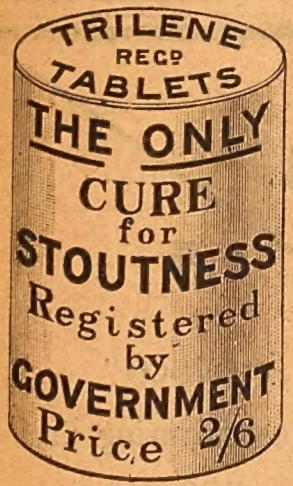

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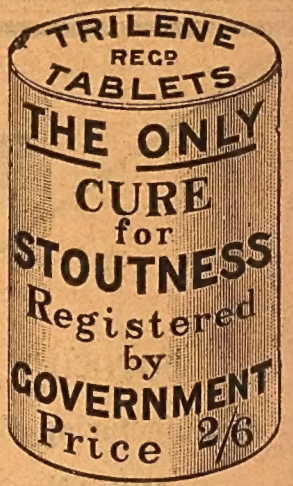

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1898.

'Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

Miss CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 7lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silvertleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

Mrs. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. McLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mr. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 28. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver nr Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady O. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Thydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2½, and am sufficiently reduced."

Mrs. DREW, of 1 Bellevue Gardens, The Nursery, Devizes, writes: "I took Tablets some years ago; they soon reduced me and I have not got it up since. Send me a box for my mother."

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